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To our dear friends

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Mr & Mrs Spain

from the author & his brother

March 18 1907.

In memory of pleasant evenings at "Rostre"

THE REAL AUSTRALIA

*Large Crown 8vo, Cloth, 5s.*

THE AUSTRALIAN  
COMMONWEALTH

New South Wales, Tasmania, Western  
Australia, South Australia, Victoria, Queens-  
land, New Zealand.

BY GREVILLE TREGARTHEN

*(The Story of the Nations)*

ILLUSTRATED

LONDON: T. FISHER UNWIN

# THE REAL AUSTRALIA

BY  
ALFRED BUCHANAN  
AUTHOR OF  
"BUBBLE REPUTATION"

Where the water-blossoms glisten,  
And by gleaming vale and vista,  
Sits the English April's sister  
Soft and sweet and wonderful.—KENDALL.

LONDON  
T. FISHER UNWIN  
ADELPHI TERRACE

1907





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## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE object of a novel is, as a general rule, to reflect life and temperament in a selected environment. For various reasons it has become the fashion to achieve this end by indirect means. An author goes to Italy, and writes a book about Italy. He tells us the things about Italy, and the people of Italy, that we want to know ; but in order to discover these things we have to read many pages dealing with imaginary persons, for whose adventures we may or may not care, and in whose personality we may or may not believe.

The present work is merely an attempt, and an obviously imperfect one, to do directly what the travelled and cosmopolitan novelist does in an indirect way. That is to say, it is an attempt to mirror in some fashion the social life, the literary life, the individual life,

the present-day life, of a developing continent and four millions of people.

The author is aware that books of this kind are usually written by travellers of more or less distinction. He knows that it is the easiest thing possible for your up-to-date journalist to rush across to Japan or Siberia and to be back in six months with the MSS. of a book that will exhaust the subject. He knows this; and he is bound to admit that he may be lacking in that breezy and picturesque point of view which follows naturally on an acquaintance of ten weeks, but is liable to vanish with a knowledge of ten years.

Yet he does not apologise; certainly not for the subject matter, nor yet for the fact that he writes about Australia as a resident Australian. The living world should be at least as worthy of interpretation as the dead world, or the world that existed only in some writer's brain. What he does apologise for is the treatment, should that prove *altogether* inadequate to the theme.

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# THE REAL AUSTRALIA

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## I

### VIRTUES AND VICES

Over the ball of it,  
Peering and prying,  
How I see all of it,  
*Life* there outlying !

STRICTLY speaking, there is no such thing as national character. That is to say, there is no set of qualities peculiar to any one nation. In every known country extremes meet. They meet now, as they met in the days when history began. Greece has had its Zeno and its Epicurus, Rome its Octavian and its Vitellius, France its Barrère and its Chateaubriand, Germany its Heine and its Bismarck, England its Cromwell and its John Wilkes. Why multiply the list? Why assert of the contrasted characters that exist always side by side that one is typical of the people as a whole, and the other is not? Why imply that one class of individual ceases to exist at a particular

parallel of latitude, and another begins there and then to take its rise?

But while there is no such thing as national character—except in the sense that historians find it convenient to use—it is yet a fact that certain people encourage each other in certain practices, and that these practices come in time to assume the proportions of public virtues and vices. One environment may permit an individual to wear a species of garment, or to indulge in a form of language that would be among other surroundings either legally forbidden, or frowned out of existence. The unwritten law in regard to externals insensibly modifies both the law of conduct and the habit of thought. In Australia there are opposing tendencies at work. There is, in the first place, the tendency to freedom and to license which the remoteness from an older civilisation fosters. Opposed to this, and rapidly overcoming it, is the tendency of a country, as it develops settled institutions, to mould itself on the ambitious models of fashionable society elsewhere. As a third factor, and an undoubtedly powerful one, there is the influence of climate. This is tending in Australia to

produce a different race of beings, physically and morally, from that in the Northern Hemisphere. It is tending to do so—but up to the present it has produced a crop of half results, of insufficiently proven theories, and of partially established types.

There are certain qualities—virtues, they may be called—that come prominently under notice in Australia and appear, from their habit of repeating themselves, to form some integral part of the life of the community. The foremost of these good qualities is that of hospitality. And here a singular anomaly presents itself. Politically the Australians are the most exclusive and the most inhospitable race on earth. Their only rivals in this respect must be looked for among the bottled-up Confucians of China, or the mysterious Buddhists of Thibet. The “white-ocean” policy of the Federal Parliament, no less than the present Immigration Restriction Act, with its humorous travesty of an education test, is the most glaring instance of political bigotry that has come to light in modern times. The whole of this legislation has been described by an Australian Prime Minister as a “monstrous

outrage" on every tolerant sentiment and every democratic ideal. Yet the law has been in force for three years and no Minister or Government has dared to repeal it. It is true that a certain concession has been made in favour of the Japanese. But it is only a partial concession. There the law stands on the statute-book; and there it seems likely to remain until the excluded victors of Tsu-shima show a desire to argue the question from the vantage ground of a battle-ship. In the latter event anything might come to pass.

The anomaly consists in the fact that the Australians, desiring to live politically like frogs in a well, are, as individuals, among the most open-hearted and hospitable in the world. The prevailing temper is shown in small things as in great. In England, if you are in doubt as to your locality, you feel some hesitation in asking a stranger to put you on the right road. The hesitancy may do the Englishman an injustice, but his manner explains it. In Australia you have only to enquire as to the whereabouts of a certain street or of a particular house, to be accompanied half the way there by a man who is manifestly and

unmistakeably pleased to be in a position to give the information. The same hospitality is shown in the average householder's desire to surround himself with as many people as possible, to entertain as many as possible, and to have as many as possible sampling his wines and his coffee and his cigars. If you are thirsty in Australia—and the thirst of the nation is proverbial—it is usual to look for some one who will drink with you. The hermit temper is not common, nor is the prevailing type that of the individual who wishes to be let alone, and to enjoy things alone. If there is a new lawn, or a new piano, or a new motor-car, the owner has a real anxiety that its merits should be tested, and its benefits shared by as large a circle as practicable. Vanity may have something to do with this desire, but however accounted for, it exists. The inconsistency between the temper of the unit and the policy of the Government—of each successive Government—runs from A to Z. The elector who will vote to have black men deprived of the means of earning a living, brown men deported, and blind or sick men refused the right to set foot on land, will, if



he meets the alleged undesirable immigrant in the ordinary paths of life, come to his assistance with an alacrity that the good Samaritan of sacred history might equal, but could not surpass.

There are other qualities that must compel admiration. The Australians are receptive-minded, tolerant—except in the political sense just mentioned—and ready to learn. The intense conservatism of older countries is not theirs. Standards are not arbitrarily fixed as they are in Britain. The social groove is not artificially restricted. It is narrowing, but it is still fairly broad. The slavish adherence to a certain set of rules, designated collectively as “good form,” is not a characteristic of the people. In the unwritten code that finds most favour there is the principle that a person may be worth cultivating even though he does not pronounce his “*a*’s” as if they were “*ai*’s,” and even though certain monosyllables, by the aid of which the smart set avoids the trouble of conversation, form no part of his vocabulary. The Australian holds—in theory, at any rate—the revolutionary doctrine that every one should be given a chance. Now and again

an individual is found who acts up to this unfashionable and somewhat crude precept.

There is something elastic in the people's attitude to life. They have not become socially or mentally atrophied by centuries of convention, by centuries of custom, by centuries of meaningless and idiotic routine. The atrocious crime of being a young nation, with much of what the word youth implies, is still to be laid at their door.

A certain warmth, a certain generous instinct, a certain spontaneity of thought and action, a certain buoyancy of temper, must be placed to the credit side of the ledger. A certain fairness to opponents must also be conceded, despite the remarks of a noted English cricketer to the contrary. This fairness becomes all the more praiseworthy when it is remembered that the only topic on which the Australians, as a people, hold any definite opinions is that of sport. Such being the case, it is inevitable that some feeling should be shown when matters of sport—that is to say, matters of far more general interest than the fate of Governments or the choosing of Parliaments—are being decided. Invidious

comparisons are sometimes drawn between the behaviour of crowds in Sydney or Melbourne, and the behaviour of crowds at Lords' or at the Oval. The fact is usually overlooked that the London rough, who is the counterpart of the Australian larrikin, is not to be met with in any numbers at an athletic contest. For one thing he has not the money to go there, and for another thing he has not the desire. But the more boisterous and more objectionable type of Australian has a habit of finding his way to cricket matches in Sydney or in Melbourne. Broadly speaking, it is a select crowd that watches the game in England—a crowd made select by the price of admission. It is a crowd less select in Australia, for the reason that the price of admission is more easily obtainable. Allowing for all the circumstances, and measuring unit for unit, it is a fact that the virtue of fairness to opponents is one that the new nation can confidently claim.

Much might be said—in fact much has already been said, and much more will be said—of the vices of the people. This is a topic on which it would be foolish to dogmatise,

seeing that so much depends on the individual point of view. Vice itself has become a term of obscure meaning. What with our logicians and metaphysicians, our up-to-date moralists, and our new hedonists—what with our emancipated lady novelists, our reforming social philosophers, and our revolting sisters and brethren—what with all these, we have no arbitrary rules of conduct, and no definitions that can for a moment be relied upon. Even so correct and comparatively orthodox a writer as Edmund Burke has made a statement implying that vice practically ceases to exist when it is sufficiently embroidered and set among sufficiently magnificent surroundings. To be vicious to the accompaniment of fine phrases and minuet-like movements—to be vicious while the rich embroideries are sweeping the floor, and the lights are falling on velvet curtains, and “the stately silver shoulder stoops”—that is not really to be vicious at all. Such at least would appear to be the general opinion. And if the general opinion is not to be taken as a guide in these matters it is difficult to say what is.

So far as national vices come under the

heading of national crimes—and the terms are more or less related, though they are not identical—it can be easily shown that Australia is neither very much better nor very much worse than other countries. The number of people who are punished each year for crimes of various kinds is, relative to population, much the same as the number similarly punished in the United Kingdom. Statistics of drunkenness are incomplete and unreliable, but there is the authority of Mulhall for the statement that while the United Kingdom consumes 3.57 proof gallons of intoxicants per inhabitant, Australasia consumes no more than 2.50 gallons. Illegitimacy is somewhat more prevalent in the Southern Hemisphere than in Great Britain, but the difference is not considerable. The proportion of illegitimate births is 6 per cent. in Australasia and only 4.15 per cent. in England and Wales, but in Scotland, where morals are understood to be rather austere, the proportion of illegitimate births is 7 per cent. And so it is in regard to most other offences—in regard to burglaries, assaults, thefts, murders and the rest. The lot of the average policeman is neither more nor

less unhappy, neither more nor less strenuous, in Australia than in England. The chances of being murdered in one's sleep — though the middle-class English household may disbelieve the statement — are not appreciably greater in Australia than they are in Great Britain.

Yet a nation that is outwardly law-abiding may be inherently vicious. The habit that saps vitality may not be the habit that advertises itself in the police-court. As a matter of fact, a heavy crop of burglaries, and assaults with violence, may be quite a healthy sign, tending to show that national vigour is unimpaired. Every philosopher knows that the abounding energy which, in the one case, drives the possessor to break open doors and to hit other people on the head will, in ninety-nine other cases, impel him to daring feats in exploration, or in athletics, or in war. It is the drug-taking habit, the cigarette-smoking habit, the card-playing habit, the gambling habit, the loafing, swearing, work-shirking habit that produces the most insidious results, and tells the most disastrous tale. None of these practices are liable, in the ordinary course, to



land the perpetrator in a Court of Law. There is no statistician who can say anything definite about them. But that they are all unduly and dangerously prevalent in Australia is a fact admitting of no reasonable doubt.

The most pervading phase of Australian character is its irresponsibility. If this is not a vice in itself, it is the parent of a great many vices. The term by which it is usually designated is lack of principle, or of moral sense. The average Englishman may be innocent of much outward profession of virtue, or, for that matter, of any definite, cut-and-dried standard of beliefs. He may be a very long way from the ideal of the just man made perfect. But very often he is discovered to possess something that may be neither creed nor conscience, but that is more potent than either. It is more than a fear of the law. It is more than regard for the opinion of others. It is more, even, than sense of shame. It is the inner something — accumulated instinct, if you will — that makes a man prefer, when the pinch comes, to do the honourable thing. At the very

least, and at the very worst, it makes him silent as to his vices, and conscious of the fact that they are not virtues. But the Australian is beginning to run into a different mould. It is the commonest occurrence in the world to find him talking and boasting, jesting and laughing, over that about which he should be most inexorably dumb. Of his successes with women, of his breakages of the seventh commandment, of his nights at bridge or in a public-house, of his supposed power of cajoling man, woman, or child—and more especially woman—he will talk as long and as often as he can get an audience to listen to him. The larger the audience the better he is pleased. It is an unfortunate tendency of the people, and the fact that there are conspicuous exceptions to the rule just laid down does not make the tendency any less noticeable or less unfortunate.

When this irresponsibility reaches its zenith, its nadir, its crown and summit of perfection or imperfection, it produces the Australian larrikin. Every one knows this product of the hour. His fame has spread from hemisphere to hemisphere, and from pole to pole. All



the hooligans of London, all the gamins of Paris, all the lazzaroni of Naples, all the miscellaneous ruffians of Cairo and Port Said, have not eclipsed, or even approached, the reputation acquired in the space of a very few decades by this child of beneficent skies and benign, smiling weather. It is impossible to say anything new about the Australian larrikin, just as it is impossible to exaggerate the heights of his lawlessness, or to plumb the depths of his depravity. But from the scientific and psychological points of view he is both interesting and valuable. There are a number of well-informed and earnest people who are distressed and disgusted by the all-pervading hypocrisy of our social laws and conventions. Mirabeau, who was exceedingly well informed, and very much in earnest, made it a boast that he had mastered all formulas. He had in fact reached the summit of irresponsibility. The Australian larrikin is in precisely the same position. But when you take weight off one man you enable him to redeem a nation; when you take weight off another you make him what he is—a living monument of hopeless vulgarity and inex-

pressible vice. In view of the fact that the temper of the average man is more disposed to make of him a larrikin than a Mirabeau, it becomes evident that artificial restraints are, in the aggregate, the salvation of the race. From the member of the "Rock's Push" and of the "Flying Angels" we learn valuable lessons — lessons which such enthusiasts as Godwin and Condorcet would have us ignore. We learn that conventional laws are necessary, that artificial restraint is admirable, that people must be prevented by force from being what most of them left to themselves would become.

Of a somewhat similar type to the larrikin, though not occupying such a dizzy pre-eminence, is the cad of common or everyday life. This individual is not quite hopeless. If he were taken in hand and disciplined, drilled, and tutored, made to shoulder a rifle and practise a compulsory goose-step, fined every day for using bad language, forbidden to stand at street corners, imprisoned for the habit of expectoration, and under no circumstances allowed the use of a bicycle, he might come in time to be a valuable citizen. At present he is left too much to his own devices. Lord

Roberts had his English counterpart in view when he announced that the future of the Empire depended on the adoption of a scheme of conscription. A warlike race is not to be discovered at street corners. It does not grow there. Neither is it over-much given to frequenting unregistered race meetings, and "two-up" schools. It swears occasionally, but only when circumstances appear to call for emphasis. Something will require to be done with the youth who perambulates its main streets before Australia will be able to supply the world with a new Thermopylæ, or even another Yalu.

The form of vice that is more or less prevalent in all countries—a form that is continually being warned against by the social brigade of the Salvation Army, and the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and a worthy Colonial Secretary, and some less worthy members of the police—is a form much in evidence in Australia. The warfare, it need hardly be said, is scarcely as profitable, while it is as unending as the warfare of the Pigmies against the Cranes. There is scarcely a main street in which, after dark,

the evidences are not visible of that which the hypocrite censures, and which the wise man merely deplores. In this continent all social currents follow their own bent. There is no attempt to make people moral by Act of Parliament. There is not even an attempt to save them by Act of Parliament from certain possibilities arising from their own actions. So the woman goes her way. Her unending sacrifice—for there is no doubt that it is a sacrifice, chosen as the less of two sacrifices—brings in the usual rewards, social outlawry, criminal associates, a fiery, unquenchable thirst, and a slum in which to draw the curtain. It is a very ancient story. In matters of this kind one does not look for novel and revolutionary features. The life of pleasure here is as pleasurable as it is elsewhere. As much, and no more. The pleasure, facetiously so called, is the outcome of an industrial system under which the working womanhood of the country is expected to feed and clothe and house itself on ten shillings a week, or less. By the toil of feminine hands—so long as they choose to toil—factories abound, industries keep

themselves going, manufacturers grow rich. By the sacrifice of feminine respectability the carrion kites of society are fed. It is an obvious truth that Australia is always in danger of being injured, politically, by its statesmen, while it is always being rescued, socially, by its nymphs of the street.

There are certain acts, certain qualities, which it is impossible to forgive. On the other hand, there is a certain species of wrongdoing that is readily pardoned. Vice, as already pointed out, is to some extent a relative term; and if the motive is not petty or sordid, if the actor can rise to great occasions, if the man or woman is superior to the occasional outbreaks of his or her worse nature, it is safe to say that the nation is still capable of great things, and is by no means inherently bad. The most noteworthy characteristic of the Australian is his mental attitude to life. It is an attitude that is in danger of becoming crudely materialistic. It is impossible to build on this anything lasting. The pursuit of pleasure may be pardonable enough; but it is distinctly disquieting, from the point of view of one who wishes his

country to be anything or to accomplish anything, to discover that the word *pleasure* is being given only one meaning. "Patient, deep-thinking Germany" was at one time laughed at by the wits of Vienna and Paris. But Germany has had its Koniggratz and its Sedan, and is laughed at no longer. The moral is that it is better, in the national sense, to be patient and deep-thinking than to be shallow and pleasure-loving. The charge that is being brought against the typical Australian is that he is not self-contained enough, not deep enough, not patient enough, not idealistic enough. The pleasure that he understands, that he works for, that he gives himself over to, that he is limited by, is the obvious pleasure that is dependent on sense, and the things of sense; and *that* must inevitably, sooner or later, become pallid and dead. He seems to be learning—in very many cases he has already learned—

To say of shame, what is it?  
Of virtue, we can miss it;  
Of sin, we can but kiss it,  
And it's no longer sin.

And he threatens—it may be only a threat—



to flutter down from the stage of spasmodic enterprise to that of foolish indifference, from that of energy to that of ineptitude, from that which commands the respect, to that which invites the contempt of nations physically stronger and more enduring than his own.

Australia has so far achieved nothing great from the national standpoint. It cannot be said to have failed, because it has not yet been called upon. There are people who declare that they have the utmost confidence in its future. And if certain present-day tendencies could be overlooked, or if they could be obviated, as they might be, this confidence would be abundantly justified. The country has still indefinite room for expansion. It is not over-populated, and for at least another century is not likely to be. The wild-eyed enthusiast who imagines, with Milton, that he can see a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man from sleep, and shaking her invincible locks, must, if he forsake the *rôle* of prophet for that of the sober speculator, find some habitation and dumping-ground for the people that are to

be born hereafter. And there are not many regions remaining where new growths can be attempted without decided inconvenience to the old. Apart from South America, Australia is practically the only country offering—the only country, that is to say, where there are millions of acres of unoccupied land, and a soil and climate that do not actually forbid approach. But the people, if they are to do great things, if they are not to become a tributary of some foreign power, or an appendage of Eastern Asia, must be prepared sooner or later to make a few changes, and even a few sacrifices. They must be prepared to give up the habit of looking to their big brothers for ideas on art and literature, and dress, and dining, and ball-room dancing, and methods of pronunciation, and national defence. They must be prepared to get a *belief* of some kind, a religion of some kind. They must be fanatical on some point—whether a religious point or a point of national honour, it does not matter—or they will go down before the Oriental fanatic as surely as the grass goes down before the scythe. No



one imagines that a dilettante preference can stand against a consuming fire.

Be it a mad dream or God's very breath,  
The fact's the same,—belief is fire.

The Australian must be prepared, in the event of great emergency, to die for something or for somebody. When he is thus prepared, his virtues and vices will not greatly matter; they will learn as a matter of course to adjust themselves.

## II

### SOCIETY

The gods their faces turn away  
From nations and their little wars ;  
But we *our golden drama* play  
Before the footlights of the stars.

GEORGE ELIOT, in a passage that has become famous, lets it be understood that good society is a terribly expensive product, that it is accustomed to float on gossamer wings of light irony, and that in order to bring it to perfection infinite labour is required from common people who sweat in factories, and toil in coal-mines, and tramp heavily about in agricultural districts "when the rainy days look dreary." The novelist was dealing particularly with England; but the circumstances which she had in mind repeat themselves more or less exactly in most civilised countries. Even in Australia, which has not been civilised very long, men are sweating in factories, and toiling in coal-mines, and grubbing industriously on way-back selections for the benefit of other people who live in

large houses and give a social tone to populous cities. Much interest attaches to this thing called "good society." Is it, as a matter of fact, floated on gossamer wings of light irony, or on gossamer wings of any sort? Is it as delicate and ethereal as George Eliot says it ought to be?

There are certain truisms that do not require to be insisted upon. They are self-evident. Mr Henry Crosland, who has become quite famous through his ingenious habit of turning positives into negatives, and negatives into positives, says that the moral tone of English upper-class circles is excellent, while that of English middle-class circles is deceitful and desperately wicked. But the ordinary man, with no literary reputation to weigh him down, declares confidently that the facts are neither as George Eliot nor as Mr Crosland declare them to be. The term society, as commonly used and understood, refers to the limited number of people who have come into possession either of a certain property or of a certain name. The atmosphere of this circle is not light and buoyant. It is heavy, and *blasé*, and tired, and dull. This

good English society does not float on gossamer wings ; it drags itself round two continents with very conscious endeavour. It is not ironical ; to be that, requires mental effort, while it is easier and more effective to be supercilious. This same society is not moral ; the whole scheme and purpose of conventional morality is narrow and circumscribed, and therefore unattractive to those unprejudiced people who perceive that arbitrary rules of conduct are made for slaves. The set in question is in no single particular what its apologists and admirers declare it to be. It is not really exclusive ; a man with sufficient means can always enter it. There is only one thing to which it is actively antagonistic, and that is ability. It is not antagonistic to poverty ; it is merely disdainful. Its arrogance is appalling. Its lack of creative power is more appalling still.

And yet while the characteristics of the best London society are of this nature—while the whole edifice would suggest the Jugurtha reflection that the city is for sale, and will perish quickly when it finds a purchaser—it is undeniably true that the passion to enter the

comparatively limited circle is steadily growing. The desire is the natural result of that envy which the man or woman who is everywhere circumscribed feels for the individual who is in all things privileged. The important circumstance at present is that the London "four hundred" were never more run after than they are to-day. Their patronage and presence were never in greater demand. We may swear that this smart set is a very dull set; we may vow with the earnestness of conviction that its very atmosphere is fatal to initiative and inimical to brains, and more destructive to morals than to either; but there is not a woman, scarcely a man among us who does not bear witness, in the way he dresses, or dines, or parts his hair, or takes the hand of a lady in a ball-room, that he is a humble imitator of the example set him by the people who live in large houses and flourish in the pages of De Brett. There is not a man outside this narrow pale, be he English or Australian, who could walk along Piccadilly in the company of two members of the aristocracy, effete though that aristocracy may be, without a sense of elation bordering on

vertigo. With all its vice and frippery and  
manity and boredom, the thing called society  
is an influence, a power, a far-reaching entity,  
a commanding and controlling force. From a  
distance we can criticise it and discover what  
it really means, what it actually is. But at  
close quarters it makes cowards of us—that  
is to say, of all who are not hermits or  
desperadoes, of all who are not phenomenally  
rich or abysmally poor.

Good society, as already mentioned, is a  
peculiarly English institution. Nevertheless,  
it has flourishing offshoots in different parts  
of the world. In Australia, there is rapidly  
growing up a set of conventions and a habit  
of speech founded on a close study of the  
older community. There is such a thing as  
Australian society. It exists. It is ambitious.  
It aspires to be recognised. It wants to grow.  
Some of its members have been presented at  
Court and have brought back with them large  
social aspirations. Certain of its women have  
been taken into dinner by members of the  
British peerage. Quite a number of Australian  
sailors have been in Bond Street and have  
made observations. A proportion of Australian

dressmakers has seen something of Paris. These dealers in cloth and millinery have magnificent ideas. They have impressed themselves and their notions on the home-staying community. So it has come about that dress, wealth, reputation, fashion, and appearance have done a great deal between them to create the nucleus of a favoured *clientèle*, and to scatter to the winds the obsolete idea that in a democracy all things are equal, and all people are socially on a *par*.

What, it may be asked at the outset, is meant by the term "Australian society"? It has been agreed that something of the kind has been evolved. But who are the individuals? Where are they? How can they be recognised? For purposes of rough-and-ready definition, they may be classified as the people who are in the habit of receiving invitations to Government House. It is the business of the aide-de-camp to discover who is who in Australia. The task is impossible to the statistician or the scientist, but it seems in some mysterious fashion to fit in with the temperament and abilities of an aide-de-camp. There are no definite rules that can be relied



upon. The dividing line between desirables and non-desirables is of the most shifty, and uncertain, and elusive character. Yet, when mistakes are made, as they always will be, the social uproar is tremendous. The unfortunate official whose business it is to request the pleasure of So-and-so's company at a Vice-regal dance, or a garden party, is for ever voyaging upon troubled waters, with scarcely a beacon or a land-mark to guide him. His eye may light upon a few judges, a few prominent politicians, one or two naval and military officers, half a dozen wealthy land-owners, and a few prosperous warehousemen. So far as they are concerned, he knows he is safe. But there remain the grocer, the land-agent, the brewer, the confectioner, the lawyer, the singer, the actor, the doctor, the grass-widow, and many more — a miscellaneous assortment which cannot be entirely ignored or collectively accepted, and which presents a problem baffling in the last degree.

It is almost unnecessary to say that the social world of Australia is controlled by women. It is they who set most store upon artificial distinctions. It is they who value



most the receipt of a request to disport themselves on His Excellency's lawn, or in His Excellency's ball-room. It is they who understand best how far the Vice-regal card of invitation exalts them over their sisters who have not come in for a like attention. The average man, if left to his own devices, would not sparkle with animation at the prospect of either a Government House dance, or a Government House garden party. This average man—unless he happens to be very young and very volatile—is not an enthusiastic exponent of those ball-room exercises in which Ouida's heroes excel. Neither has he any delight in the formality and stiffness, the silk hats and the long coats inseparable from a two hours' promenade on some distinguished person's lawn. If it were a matter of personal inclination, he would confess that he knew better ways of amusing himself. But the Australian woman is socially ambitious. Her passion for social festivities is unquenchable. When the tocsin has sounded she will march with the procession—at the head of it, if she can. And the man of her circle, whether he likes it or not, must march with her.

All the mannerisms that do duty in the society of one hemisphere come in their turn to do duty in the society of the other. The puppets advance and retire to identical sets of rules. If the high handshake is fashionable in England, it must become fashionable in Australia. If it is the custom to take your partner's arm in the West End of London, it has to be the custom, a little later, in certain quarters of Melbourne and Sydney. If it is the correct thing for the young English lordling to talk in tired monosyllables to the daughter of the Marquis, it is equally the correct thing for the Australian young man of means to look as bored as possible when conversing with the daughter of the host. One artificiality follows another. The imitative processes extend to the manner of using a finger-bowl, and of handling an eye-glass. If white waistcoats and gaudy ties are the rule among certain people in England, they become the rule among certain people in Australia. Society in either country is raised, fortified, buttressed, and embellished with shams—with shams that have nothing to recommend them on the score of cleverness, or ingenuity, or

outward grace or hidden meaning. They represent, simply and solely, the desire of a certain class to do certain things in a manner peculiar to itself.

As to the inner life of this fashionable society, as it exists in Australia, there is little new to be said. The object in view is simply that in view everywhere else, namely, that of obtaining as much amusement as possible, and of being left to one's own devices as little as possible. All the distractions known to civilised man are drawn upon in one country as in another. The men bet on racecourses, drink, and play cards. The women do all three, and in addition smoke and talk scandal. In one respect Australian society has an advantage over that of London, or of Paris. It has more physical energy with which to pursue its vices and its follies to the bitter end. Its opportunities for extravagant display may be fewer, but its zest is greater. It has no series of inter-marriages to look back upon. It has no titled and *blasé* families to support. Its fathers or its grandfathers belonged to the race of hardy pioneers. The present generation is the product of a virile stock. As a

consequence it has not exhausted its physical equipment. There is a certain buoyancy about its mental attitude, a certain juvenility in its pursuit of the bubbles of the moment. The *nil admirari* manner, borrowed from London drawing-rooms, sits awkwardly on its shoulders. If it could only get away from old-world traditions, if it were willing to stand upon its feet, if it would leave its absurd mannerisms to the people who first invented them, this Australian society, with all its health and youth and unimpaired vitality, with all its magnificent opportunities furnished by variety of scene and splendour of climate, might set an example of living which other countries would have reason to envy, if they had not the power to imitate. For Australia, if the fact were only recognised, is a country in which it is possible to enjoy oneself finely, or to deny oneself greatly, as the mood pleases, independently of the world.

One characteristic of Australian society is its vulgarity ; another is its snobbery ; another is its lack of ideals. The vulgarity is apparent on the surface. It is usually explained on the ground of want of familiarity with the more

luxurious and the more cultivated conditions of living. To endow a man who commenced life as a small shopkeeper with a large house, a carriage, some superior furniture, and still more expensive possessions in the shape of wife and daughters, is not to make him refined. The glorified tradesman is the pivot of the social life of the continent. The distinction between the wholesale and the retail dealer, which is still more or less observed in England, does not obtain here. If a man has the money he is accepted at his own valuation. He can go anywhere. Government House throws its gates open to him, unless, indeed, it should have happened that certain incidents of an unusually lurid character have reached the ears of the painstaking aide-de-camp. The landowner, if his lands are extensive enough, is another who helps to set the standard. He also is usually a novice at the pursuits and mannerisms that find favour with the more seasoned upper classes. The trail of newness, of *gaucherie*, of awkward, although of lavish ostentation, is over the whole social fabric. The people have zest and energy. They dine well, drink well, gamble well. But they have

not yet learned to do these things with the nonchalant air that comes of heredity or of much experience.

The snobbery of Australian society is a matter equally beyond the reach of question. It is an elementary principle in all speculations as to human conduct that the man or woman who is intrinsically best worth knowing is the one who asserts himself or herself least. The plutocrats of Australia are continually and tirelessly asserting themselves. They all advertise—possibly because of the survival of the shopkeeping instinct, which prompted them in earlier days to get ahead of the man next door by making a finer display of haberdashery or of cold meat. The advertising habit does not die out in one generation. At present it dominates the social life of the community. This is the reason why the man who does not care to advertise, or feels he has no need to advertise, prefers to stay away from gatherings at which the resplendent tradesmen are the observed of all observers. There are *many* men of sensibility, of imagination, of delicacy of thought and refinement of feeling, in Australia. There are women equally gifted.



But these are not the people who besiege the Vice-regal Residence most determinedly, or appear in the papers most often. If they have means, or leisure, or culture—and often they have all three—they look for congenial souls, or are satisfied to remain apart.

The selfishness of Australian society is more or less implied in what has been already stated ; but a special significance is often given to the word in connection with the declining birth-rate. The population of the continent is by no means stationary. The birth-rate is about 28 per thousand, and the death-rate scarcely 13 per thousand. In fifty years, even at the present rate of increase, there will be 8,000,000 people in the Commonwealth. But the preachers and politicians are not satisfied. They want the increase to be still greater, the births to be still more numerous. They have discovered that the cradle of the working man—when he can afford such an article of furniture—is seldom empty, while the cradle of the rich mother has only an occasional inmate. The cry has gone up that the women of the well-to-do class are furnishing a bad precedent. A committee of nine, appointed

by the New South Wales Government, recently investigated the whole question. And the conclusion arrived at is that Australia, and more especially its middle and upper classes, are socially and morally in a bad way.

It is remarkable that so much unnecessary alarm should have been created over this subject. To say that the diminishing birth-rate is necessarily a bad sign is to ignore great part of the teaching of history, and of science, and of civilisation. Birth is stronger than death, and has been throughout the ages. It was so when the barbarians were knocking at the gates of the Eternal City; when the tens of thousands of Attila were falling before the tens of thousands of Aetius; when Goth and Vandal, Frank and Scythian, were transforming Central Europe into a charnel pit; when famine and pestilence were assisting the war-god of the Middle Ages to keep population in check. Yet population grew then, and is growing now. Science, by checking disease, and humanitarian sentiment, by preventing war, are helping it to grow still faster. No one can pretend to say what the end will be. The temper of Australian society is



probably no more unselfish and no more moral than is that of any other society equally endowed with means and leisure time. But even out of evil good may come ; and if selfishness and immorality are evils, it has yet to be shown that a declining birth-rate belongs to the same category.

The tone of what is called society is, as a matter of fact, the outward expression of the country's ideal. Australia badly wants an ideal. At present it has none worthy of the name. It is not looking for one ; at least there are few indications of a search. What is everybody striving for? Unto what altar is the mysterious priest of nationhood leading his followers? Of what nature are the offerings? Who are the deities that are being invoked? These are all questions that should interest the speculative mind. As to the habits and inspirations of the working classes, there is not much uncertainty. They are aiming—and it is an honourable and straightforward aim—at improved mental and material conditions of living. But as the present argument deals with methods of employing leisure, and the workers are understood to

have no leisure, they may be omitted from the general conclusion. The leisured classes, the privileged classes, the social classes have one, and only one objective. Their familiar gods are those of the worshippers in *Atalanta in Calydon* — Pan by day, and Bacchus by night. Their mission is to pass the time, to kill it in the most agreeable way, to accompany its exit with the music of flutes, to see that its obsequies are attended by the most lulling effects, the most soothing harmonies, the most insidious appeals to brain and sense that money will allow.

Once upon a time there were ideals. The patriotic ideal was one of these, and it was decidedly useful, though from the logical standpoint rather absurd. The march of intelligence teaches that the willingness to die for one's country is the survival of a crude and primitive instinct; that it is much finer, as well as much safer, to entertain a cosmopolitan feeling of regard for the foreigner, and not to put oneself unnecessarily in his way. Leonidas, when he put himself in the way at Thermopylæ, illustrated the earlier man's fondness for an ideal. From his country's

point of view his ideal was a good one, though for himself it had no concrete value. Another manifestation that is occasionally to be met with in Europe and elsewhere is what might be called the aristocratic ideal. This is an inheritance from feudal times. Yet a third variety is the intellectual ideal. France in the time of Louis XIV. grew tired of looking up to the people of high birth, and for a brief space looked up to the people of high intelligence. Every member of the best society carried his sonnet about with him as the modern man carries his walking-stick. The age of Louis and of Molière was the hey-day of the intellectual ideal.

In Australia there is no real acknowledgment of any of these three. There is no inducement to the average citizen to be patriotic. The quality, so far from being idealised, is hardly recognised. Times have altered since King Xerxes looked out over Salamis and since Arnold von Winkelreid fell at Sempach. The people of the new continent have never been called upon to defend themselves. Where there is no desire for fighting, no military spirit, no past history, no present

danger, there is not likely to be a patriotic ideal. If you were to ask the average Australian whether it was not his highest ambition to die for his country he would take you either for a person of weak intellect, or for an eccentric amateur comedian. Neither is there any quality in the people that corresponds to the ancient practice of idealising noble birth. The country has no aristocracy of its own. It has no special desire for one. Whatever ambitions or aspirations it may acknowledge, they have nothing to do with a titled class. Neither is the typical Australian given to worshipping intellect as such. When the particular brand of intellect brought under his notice has been commercially successful, and can command a high market value, he is appreciative and respectful. But for the quality itself he has no special regard, and in nine cases out of ten does not recognise it when it is there.

Without any such ideals as connect themselves with patriotism, with good birth, and with intellect, Australia bestows its enthusiastic idolatry on the individual possessed of great riches. Patriotism, good conduct,

character, intelligence, imagination, fancy, unselfishness, brilliancy of expression — all these things are quite unnecessary in local social circles. It is only when they have been translated into a cash value that they can be seriously considered. It is not that brains are ruled out of court. They are always tolerated. But it is only when they have allied themselves with some kind of commercial success that they are sought after. The ideal before the community—the ideal that finds expression in society, that shines through the restless eyes of the women, and stamps itself on the dissatisfied faces of the men—is nothing if not a monetary one. Strictly speaking, therefore, it is not an ideal at all. Money will purchase everything that the country has to offer, and for want of something else it does duty as the country's ideal.

It is unfortunate that the continent should be in this position—the position of having nothing but a large fortune, a motor car, and a quantity of expensive furniture to aim at. Henry Lawson and one or two other poorly appreciated writers of talent have endeavoured

to inspire the people with a martial sentiment, but as yet without success. All invocations to the "star of Australia" have so far fallen on deaf ears. There is no star of Australia. It has not set, and it has never risen. Until something unforeseen happens it does not seem likely to rise. How can it? The well-spring from which patriotic aspirations mount up has not yet been discovered. People with admirable intentions have recommended Australia, as an escape from mere frivolous amusements, to cultivate various forms of the strenuous life—for example, the life in barracks, the life in libraries, the life on the intellectual mountain top, the life in the home. It is unquestionable that a new development of some kind is badly needed. Australia would reap a substantial benefit, and one reflected throughout all ranks and conditions, if in the near future it evolved *something*, whether it were a patriotic ideal, a jingoistic ideal, a home-life ideal, a moral, intellectual, religious, or even a physical ideal. If it is to play a respectable part in future questions of magnitude it must, at any rate, develop some variation in the pleasure-seeking,



money-making, work-shirking propensities that represent the greater part of its social life. Probably the salvation, when it does come, will be wrought by the working classes; for though they have blundered industrially, and failed more than once politically, they have the confidence of numbers, they are emancipated, and they are quick to learn. The ultimate destiny of the Australian continent is very largely in their hands.



### III

## JOURNALISM

The many waves of thought, the mighty tides,  
The ground swell that rolls up from other lands,  
From far-off worlds, from dim eternal shores  
Whose echo dashes on life's wave-worn strands.

THE people who are connected with journalism in Australia, as elsewhere, fall naturally into three classes — managers, sub-editors, and newspaper writers. There are numerous subdivisions, but these are the three cardinal ones. The outside public does not always appreciate the value of the classification just given. The outside public may, therefore, in its tolerance, submit to be informed. For modern journalism has become a vast and comprehensive and complex thing. It touches every one, interests every one, more or less attracts every one, more or less mystifies every one. The man who is not an outsider, but who has had the lot to

See with eye serene  
The very pulse of the machine—

who has been caught up and whirled round  
by the wheels, so to speak—should be able

to claim the privilege of describing his observations and his sensations.

The managerial class is deserving of much respect, and usually gets all that it deserves. Its members are few, but its influence is undoubtedly great. Only a short account need be given of the character and abilities of the handful of men who either own or manage the great "dailies" of Australia.

For them the anonymity of the profession does not exist. They live much in the public eye. They collect the praise; they accept the flattery; they grow rich on the proceeds. The blame, when there is blame, is also theirs. But what terrors can the breath of outside criticism have for men who sell their papers at the rate of 30,000 or 40,000, or 100,000 a day? What profit is there in kicking against the pricks? These men who control the city newspapers form a separate oligarchy, and a powerful one. They are not troubled with any misgivings as to their own potentialities in the cosmos. They have a practical working knowledge of the world, and a vast confidence in themselves. Sometimes they know how to write, sometimes they do not. In any

case it does not matter. Whatever brains they want they can easily purchase. They live in large mansions in the suburbs, arrive at their offices at eleven o'clock in the morning, go regularly to Government House, and deal in Napoleonic fashion with complaints from the sub-editor, with suggestions from the commercial world, with expostulations from aggrieved politicians, and with applications for increases of salary from unsatisfied members of the staff. They have won their way to big positions, and they know it. It is an excellent and a pleasant thing to be the proprietor or the manager of a large newspaper in Australia.

The sub-editors, again, form a class by themselves; they resemble the managers in that they are not really journalists. Possibly at some stage of their individual careers they may have been, but they are so no longer. As a matter of fact they are the sworn enemies of journalism. They stand like the British infantry at Waterloo—a sort of cold iron palisade against which the effervescence of youthful journalistic enterprise dashes itself in vain. They represent not so much the literary, as the commercial instinct of the

paper. They are the outposts which a cautious management sets to keep watch against the Philistines. The sub-editor has tremendous responsibility and very little power. Therein lies the tragedy of his existence. Before he begins his long series of vigils under the electric lamp, he knows that while he will get no manner of praise if everything goes right, he will get short and decisive shrift if anything goes wrong. He knows this very well; and the knowledge makes him what he is.

A strange existence, a strange personality is that of the sub-editor. He seems to resemble the patient, sleepless Eremite of Keats's last sonnet; he is always there, and he is always "watching with eternal lids apart." It is impossible not to admire him. He must, to be in any sense worthy of his post, possess great abilities. The machine that he controls is vast, unwieldy, and yet sensationally rapid in its flight. The Rio Grande of Paterson's Steeplechase did not require a touch half so firm or half so fine to keep him in his course. Of the thousand objectionable, offensive, libellous, dangerous,

unnecessary or unwise things that come under the sub-editor's notice every week, how many get past him? How many does he suffer to see the light of day? It is impossible not to admire the sub-editor, but it is difficult to like him. He must be a man without pity and without remorse. If he made allowance for good intentions, if he judged otherwise than by results, he would ruin his paper in a month. If he did not effectively discourage the swarm of budding writers who attempt to rush him, he would speedily have to cease publication. If he were not constantly saying unpleasant things, he would inaugurate a reign of chaos. And yet there are one or two first-class sub-editors in Australia who are well liked, and by none better than by their victims. It is a strange anomaly, but there it is. In any case it is a great tribute to the personality of the man.

Of the third class, the order of journalists proper, a great deal might be said. This class includes all those who get their living by furnishing copy to the newspapers of the country. They are a motley crowd; they number in their ranks representatives of all

the professions, and of no profession at all. They embrace men and women of good social position, and men and women who are distinctly outside the pale. They have no definite organisation, no professional status, no formal rules of etiquette, no exclusive caste, no artificial barriers against membership. They have one standard of living, unorthodoxy; one bond of fellowship, Bohemianism; one passport to success, ability; one aversion, dulness; one insidious enemy, human nature; one unreliable friend—the world.

For these workers of the community there should be, in the aggregate, a feeling of considerable respect and of no little sympathy. Of respect, because in the mass they accomplish great things. The really first-class journalist showers a wealth of good phrasing, clever word-painting, wise discrimination, light fancy, brilliant humour, and saving common-sense on the breakfast-tables of a quarter of a million people each morning. He does all this and more. The result has come to be looked upon as necessary, obvious, mechanical, in a sense inevitable. It represents to the average reader the outpourings of a great machine.



And a machine it certainly is, but one that is intricately fashioned, piece by piece, out of the minds and bodies, and hopes and fears, and personal gifts and graces of tens of hundreds of unrecognised writers. Unrecognised — the word that expresses always the salvation of the bad journalist, and always the detriment, or the ultimate ruin, of the good one.

These men are entitled to sympathy, or would be if they did not include in their ranks so many specimens of moral obloquy, so many hopeless outcasts from all the paths of reasonably sane and tolerable behaviour. Journalism makes a man acquainted with strange bed-fellows. Yet, taking it right through it contains probably more *ability* than all the rest of the professions put together, though possibly less *knowledge* than is to be found in any one of them. The newspaper writer, considered as a type, is always overworked, and always underpaid. Australia in this respect is no exception to other parts of the world. The men who labour behind the veil of anonymous journalism are rewarded for the most part with a living wage, and are swept out of sight



as the new generation comes along. When their initiative goes, they go. Time is their deadliest enemy. Instead of fighting for them as it fights for the barrister and the medical man, it is constantly threatening them with loss of initiative, with loss of energy, with loss of brilliance. Honey is proverbially sweet for a season; but no one knows better than the journalist that the laurel which he wins this morning cannot last till to-morrow.

As to the products of this handiwork—what is to be said of them? The Australian newspaper has already developed a character of its own. Its place is somewhere between the startling sensationalism of New York and San Francisco, and the solemn impressiveness of the older London school. The representative editor balances himself between these two modes of journalism. He is seldom quite free from the English traditions, but he knows his readers; he knows that they, too, are somewhat under the influence of the older and more respectable associations; he knows that, while they have no taste for solid reading, and are always ready to be excited or amused, they have yet a contempt for machine-made

sensationalism, for foolish and frothy elaboration, for staring capital letters, for shriekful epithets, for the flimsier kind of composition that rears itself on a basis of sand. Hence it may be that the press of the Commonwealth has followed, for the most part, a middle course, and has endeavoured to be neither too dull nor too picturesque. The effort has often resulted in insignificance ; but it has now and again achieved great success.

For purposes of illustration it is not necessary to go beyond Melbourne and Sydney. The smaller capital cities, Adelaide, Brisbane, and Perth, are content as a rule to follow their leaders. Whatever is good or bad, or in any way distinctive at the centre, you will find reflected, though in a slighter and paler fashion, in the towns further north and further west. The same lines of demarcation hold good throughout the continent. In each city one morning paper calls itself "liberal" or "national," while its rival goes one better, and styles itself "radical" or "democratic." The word "conservative" has become a taunt, and is never an acknowledged title. The predominant tendency is for the younger

and more democratic organ to go beyond its older and more serious competitor. The only important exception seems to be that in Perth, where the *West Australian* occupies a unique position. It is the accented mouth-piece of "groperism"; that is to say, of those privileged few who came to the State in early days, and monopolised as much of the earth as seemed worthy of their attention. Needless to add, these people are more conservative than they care to admit. The newspaper of their choice is singularly popular considering the circumstances. Under the guidance of an extraordinarily far-seeing and subtle-minded editor who has a rare faculty for flattering a democratic audience, while really ruling and guiding it—who knows also how to bend to the storm when to beat against it is no longer possible—the *West Australian* is more widely read, and more influential, to-day than it ever was, and that in the midst of a people containing a stronger socialistic infusion than is to be met with elsewhere in Australia.

It is in Melbourne and Sydney, however, that we get the most useful and instructive illustrations of the working of the journalistic

machine. The *Age* and *Argus* in the former city; the *Morning Herald* and *Daily Telegraph* in Sydney, represent the best that Australia has yet been able to accomplish in this field of enterprise. The *Age* is referred to first because it claims, and with an emphasis that frightens contradiction, to have the largest circulation of any daily south of the line. Its political influence, though perhaps hardly what it was, has also to be reckoned with. The *Age* has been in existence just fifty-two years; it has been consistently fortunate in the men behind it. More especially it has been fortunate in its proprietor. It owes its power, its prestige, its circulation, its character, its very existence to David Syme, who is still, at a venerable age, an active, working journalist, and who has the distinction of being the most respected and the most disliked man in Australia—perhaps also one of the very best liked by the few who know him really well. That he has used his immense power fearlessly, and on the whole for good, is unquestionable. The present editor of the *Age* acts up to the policy of the proprietor. Never laying claim to pyrotechnical skill as a writer, and not

giving too much rein to his imagination, he is yet pre-eminently shrewd, far seeing, clear-sighted, well informed, capable, and where business interests are concerned, inflexible as death itself. In private life no man could be more popular or more deferentially urbane.

The *Argus* suffers now, and has always suffered, from want of definite and decisive leadership. On its general staff it has had during the past ten or fifteen years more brilliant men—considered as reporters, at any rate—than any other daily paper in the English language. But instead of advancing to meet the times it has stood still, and talked impressively of *many* things. More particularly it has talked about the dangers of empiricism, and the responsibilities of the press. People read it, and will continue to read it, not so much for its opinions, as for the graceful manner in which most of its writers contrive to deal with the English language. For the rest its views on Imperialism and Free-trade fall on unwilling ears.

The *Morning Herald* is the oldest paper in the Commonwealth, and is built on the same lines as the *Argus*. It has done great things for

the tone and temper of Australian journalism. Latterly, it has been showing signs of democratic restlessness that have caused its older admirers a certain amount of alarm.

The *Daily Telegraph* is the Mary Jane of Australian journalism. It is the most active, the most aggressive, the most tireless, the most sensation-loving, the most hysterical, the most shrill-voiced, the most daring, and the most inventive paper published on the continent. It is a slab of San Francisco tumbled down in the vicinity of Botany Bay.

This reference to certain leading journals brings up a large question—the question of the power of the newspaper press in Australia. Is it an excessive power? And how does it compare with the power of the press in other countries? So far as their political creeds are concerned, the Australians have been called a newspaper-ridden community. They are often too tired to think, and they let the paper think for them. The writer recollects calling upon a prominent official who had just returned to Melbourne after a visit for political purposes to England. The first, and almost the only observation this gentleman made, was



that "They are not afraid of the newspapers in the old country." It was this circumstance that had impressed him more than anything else, although during his absence he had been everywhere, and had seen a great deal. If you are a public man you must read and despise the papers. If you do not read them, you will miss something. If you do not despise them, they will worry the life out of you. The *Age* is the stock instance of a paper from which tens of thousands of adult, and supposedly intelligent voters have been content to take their opinions. This journal has made and unmade many Ministries. The *Sydney Daily Telegraph* is aspiring to fill the same rôle, but so far with not the same success. It is quite certain, however, that Australian newspapers of the larger class possess more influence in certain directions than is good either for themselves or for the community.

Another question very often debated is that of the fairness or otherwise of the press of the Commonwealth. Some of the leading journals have a habit of assuring the public that they are scrupulously fair; others discreetly say nothing on the subject; but almost every one



has adopted an admirable and impressive motto which it places on view in a conspicuous place over the leading columns. The motto may be intended as a salve for the consciences of the management. There is a well-known story of a man who was not religious, but who always took off his hat when passing a church. Having paid that homage to his better instincts, he naturally felt more at liberty to cultivate his other ones. Having hoisted his motto, and having made obeisance to the abstract idea of fairness, the newspaper proprietor feels that he must not allow himself to be regarded as in any sense a bigot, or a moral fanatic. He has passed the church and taken off his hat. For the rest, there are the interests of his paper to think about. If these interests do not always coincide with the interests of individuals, the circumstance is much to be regretted—from the point of view of the individuals.

Some admirable diatribes have been uttered from pulpits and platforms, and from Supreme Court benches, on the subject of newspaper morality in Australia. During the hearing of a recent libel case in Melbourne, a learned

judge lashed himself into a white-heat of indignation over the sinfulness of press writers who advocate views which they do not hold, and refrain from publishing statements which they do not like. His Honour found it hard to believe that such monsters could be discovered walking the earth in the guise of men. Similar sentiments have been echoed and re-echoed everywhere. 'There is nothing in the world quite so fine as the average man's idea of what a newspaper *ought* to be. No matter what this average man may be prepared to do, or to advocate, or to believe himself, he is shocked beyond measure to find that even an influential newspaper may have commercial instincts, that it may not be disposed to love its enemies, that it may object to publishing statements which tell against it, that it may be both unable and unwilling to set an example of sublime innocence and spotless purity to the people who read its pages.

A newspaper's virtue, like a woman's, has a special meaning, and the meaning which outsiders attach to the word "virtue," as applied to a newspaper, is not necessarily

that which obtains within the craft. The goal which every management has in view is the goal of success—not spiritual or ethical, but hard, financial, and materialistic success. The proprietor's virtue, the editor's virtue, the writer's virtue, are synonymous, among members of the profession, with the ability to produce a readable, a saleable, and an otherwise valuable article. No one blames a lawyer for advocating a cause in which he does not believe; no one censures a grocer for selling a brand of tea which he does not personally like; no one objects to a carpenter putting up houses in which he would not care to dwell. Why should the newspaper be accused of unfairness when it does what is best for itself? Like every private individual, it must keep within bounds. If it commits a transgression there is always the libel law. If it indulges in personal malice, there is always the gaol. The singular thing is that so many journals—particularly the patriarchs of Sydney and Melbourne—should be so anxious to assure the public of the excellence of their intentions. As though good intentions had ever a market value, as though the

commercial instinct and the highest moral principles were not always and necessarily opposed!

What of the newspaper writer's calling as such? Is it worth following? From the outside it looks attractive enough. Even from the inside it has its charms, meretricious and otherwise. There is a certain glitter and glamour about the profession, particularly in its early stages. The absence of class distinctions helps the journalist, and makes his work infinitely more agreeable. To a man with a real literary turn—or what is even better, a news' instinct—promotion comes rapidly. He escapes the dull routine of other callings; he comes almost immediately into the larger portion of his inheritance. The reputation that blossoms towards the end of life, the rewards that come eventually, but with glacial slowness, the solid and sure gains of experience, all these are no part of his outlook. But he acquires in a few months a reputation and a standing that elsewhere are only the product of years. He steps at once into a wide and breezy circle; he is thrown into daily contact with the most interesting,

the most notorious, and the most illustrious personages of the time. About the work itself there is a peculiar, mirage-like quality ; it always seems to be pointing beyond the desert of daily drudgery, beyond the arid region of hack-work and small salaries, to the smiling country of fortune and literary fame. The young newspaper writer "never is, but is always to be, blest."

There are many people who do not require to be warned against journalism ; they drift into it, or fall into it, after chequered experiences elsewhere. But to the youth who has a choice of professions, and who thinks of choosing this one, a word of counsel may be tendered. There is no calling that makes such demands on talent, that asks so much, or that treats its tried servants so badly in the end. The man on the general staff of a big Australian daily, may for a year or two, or for a dozen years, have a good share of what the heart desires. He may have a degree of reputation, an amount of ready money, a following of friends ; but the money, the friends, the reputation are all liable to vanish at brief notice. The more brilliant the writer

is, the more quickly does he exhaust his stock of nervous energy. After the first few years, time, as already remarked, begins to work, not *for*, but *against* him ; the more capable and the more talked of he is, the more insidiously do adverse influences begin to grow up. As a rule, his is not the temperament which weighs chances, or lays up store for the future : and when the day of his mental ascendancy is past, the management regretfully but firmly shows him the door.

The writer has in mind four representative Australian journalists whose abilities were, or are now, of the very highest. From the ranks of any profession, or from all the professions together, it would be difficult to pick in Australia four men who could boast in the aggregate a greater measure of natural or of practised ability. Each of these four has, time after time, charmed, interested, and amused, hundreds of thousands of perceptive and critical readers. Had they given half the same talent to law or medicine, to science or politics, each of the four would beyond doubt have become rich and famous. But what has happened? One of them, possibly the most



brilliant of the brilliant quartette, died early, in some measure a victim to the hospitality and conviviality that his own unique personality and charm of manner invited. Journalists in Australia will not need to be told that the reference is to the late Davison Symmons. The other three are still living. One of them, whose work conferred lustre on the Sydney *Morning Herald* during the middle 'nineties, was in part the victim of circumstances, in part the prey of his own temperament. The knowledge that he was receiving 30s. or 40s. a column for his efforts, while worse writers in England were getting paid for theirs at the rate of shillings *a line*, drove him first to misanthropy, and afterwards to other things. The third of the quartette is the writer who is known throughout the continent by the pen-name "Oriel." He is at the top of the profession; he is one of the few men in Australia who have combined social orthodoxy with newspaper brilliance; he has worked hard, and he has not thrown himself away. But what prospects of a tangible monetary reward are there for the gifted "Oriel," or for writers like "Oriel," in comparison with those



which always await the cattle dealer, the rag merchant, or the bluffing attorney? The fourth of these typical journalists is he who disguised himself in the columns of the Melbourne *Argus* and chronicled cricket, football, and other small beer for quite a number of years. He might have continued to do so indefinitely, had not the accident of the South African war given him a reputation and a name.

These are only a few illustrations, but they will suffice. The individual who launches out on the inky way must be prepared to be judged critically on his merits, and to be treated without leniency or favour. He must submit, for a time at any rate, to do the bidding of a man who is also a journalist, and perhaps a less competent one than himself. He must throw his illusions overboard; he must learn to give and take; he must be watchful and ready, prompt to observe, and quick to act; and he must be prepared to go without the richer prizes that can be won in the warehouse, or in the domain of medicine, or at the Bar.

Yet, if the would-be journalist possesses

certain qualifications, in addition to literary skill, he may be recommended to join the ranks of the unlisted legion. If he has a saving sense of self-restraint; if he has the faculty for seeing ahead; if he has a definite amount of moral stamina; if he can treat the profession, not as an end, but as a means to an end; if he can live through it and eventually rise above it—if he can do this, the press is his most perfect and his ideal medium. The monetary test is not the final one. The working journalists can at least take to themselves one or two reflections. The ways of the grocer and of the apothecary, of the lawyer and the bill-discounter, are not their ways. Government House may not know them, and the drawing-rooms of Toorak and Potts' Point may forget their feet. But they have their consolations. They are the rebels and the outlaws, and yet a strange paradox—the entertainers, the instructors, the beacons of the whole reading world.

## IV

### THE GAME OF POLITICS

Is it not better, youth  
Should strive, *through acts uncouth*,  
*Toward making*, than repose on aught found made?

THE game of politics as played in Australia has a certain vogue with almost every class. In numerous directions are to be found striking evidences of the pervading character of this form of recreation. Every state, including those whose population is only half that of a decent sized English town, has its two Houses of Legislature, and all of the states in unison have their double-barrelled Federal Parliament. Thus we get a total of fourteen Houses of Parliament, and nearer seven hundred than six hundred members to represent barely four millions of people. The amount of space these fourteen Houses and these six hundred and seventy odd members take up in the newspapers, and other chronicles of the time, is enormous. Looking at some of the facts, one would be inclined to say that

the word "recreation" was a misnomer, that the whole business was intensely and almost preternaturally serious. If a man confined his reading to the journals of Australia, if he talked to mechanics on their way home from work, or to business men over their coffee, if he attended only a few of the open-air meetings that are a feature of the life of the country, he would inevitably come to the conclusion that the whole duty of man in Australia was to record his vote, to watch his representative in Parliament, to burn incense to the proved and faithful servant, and to hurl violently from his seat any individual who ventured to tamper for a moment with the principles of justice, equality, democracy, individualism, socialism, or whatever the prevalent principle happened to be.

This would be a reasonable conclusion in certain circumstances, but it would be an entirely erroneous one. As a matter of fact the game is never really serious. In a land like Australia where many things are dull, and lifeless, and mechanical, the tone and temper of public affairs must be regarded as a pleasant relief. From the deadly seriousness

of cricket and horse-racing to the essentially humorous quality of politics, is the most agreeable of transitions. It is an incontestable fact that Australia is distinguished among all civilised countries for the buoyant atmosphere, the mirth-provoking attributes, and the Gilbertian features associated with its politics—features that constitute, indeed, the whole substance and essence of the game.

To be a successful player, you require a certain amount of aptitude, and a large measure of good fortune. Let it be assumed that you are a spectator, and desire to be something more ; that you are anxious to get among the players, to handle the stakes, to hold a winning chance. The task is easier—much easier—in Australia than it is in Great Britain, but yet it is never altogether easy. The unwritten laws governing success and failure are uncertain and peculiar. You are anxious to sit at the table among the players. It remains to be seen what kind of hand you have got. There are certain cards it is very desirable to hold ; others you can do without. Take it for granted that fortune has dealt you enterprise, ambition, intelligence, power of grasping

political questions, faculty of speech, capacity for winning friends. This is a useful hand, but will not of itself get you what you want. If somebody plays the stronger card, that is to say the power of the purse, you will go under in nine cases out of ten ; you will remain always among the onlookers in the outer ring, and will never get to the table. It is necessary to make this point clear. To say that the moneyed man can do what he likes in Australia, and that wit, eloquence, industry, and the rest are always beaten by a large banking account, would be to commit oneself to a foolish and palpable exaggeration. But no sane man would deny that, in the game now under consideration, Power of the Purse is the Ace of Trumps, and that to counterbalance it a very strong collection of cards indeed is required.

There are many things that have to be reckoned with by the man who desires to enter politics in Australia, but there is little outside the cloven hoof of mammon that he can safely reckon on. The sands of public opinion are shifting, changing. Even that useful attribute, gift of speech, is by no means



a certain passport to the post of command. The crowd is jealous and suspicious of too much ability. It is not pleasant for mediocrity to see itself outstripped by talent. A man may talk himself into Parliament. On the other hand, he may talk himself out of the possibility of ever getting there. So much depends on the impression the crowd gets of the speaker's sincerity, of his earnestness, of his moral, social, and other qualities. It may happen—in thousands of cases it has happened—that a man who can speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and whose whole life has been patriotically unselfish, has been unable to gain a place in the counsels of the nation. For some reason the onlookers would not take to him ; they have disliked or misread his cards, disliked or misread the man. The influence of the Trades' Union is one powerful lever. Many a man has succeeded in entering public life by its aid ; but the Trades' Union is becoming to a greater extent each year a political conglomeration of fiercely ambitious units, and nine-tenths of the speakers who declaim at a Trades' Hall or Union meeting have Parliament in view. Every speaker



watches, criticises, and mistrusts every other speaker. In the rush for the spoils it is difficult to say who will, and who will not, come eventually to the front. Capacity has to be shown, friends have to be made, opponents have to be silenced, rival interests have to be placated, cliques have to be frustrated, logs have to be rolled, wires have to be pulled, and much else has to be done before the goal can be attained. To the participant it is all very exciting, and to the onlooker it is very droll indeed.

But it is in Parliament that the fascination of the game really begins. So fascinating is it to the great majority of the participants who have reached this stage, that you will scarcely find one in a hundred who will offer to give up his place at the table, no matter how his chances of winning a large stake may have dwindled, no matter how much he may be out of pocket, no matter how his fellow-players may be wishing him somewhere else. To say this is not to suggest the worst kind of motive, or to cast reflections on individuals. The writer knows a great many Australian politicians, and is inclined to think that on the

whole he likes them better than any other class. He regards them as, for the most part, genial, pleasant fellows. Speaking broadly, they are not dull-witted, and they are not corrupt. There was a time when the average member of an English Parliament was both. The Australian politician is usually a good sportsman: he can take his winnings without boasting, and he can take his failures like a man. He is under no illusions as to his own aims, or his own qualities. He knows that it is to his interest to be considered as a patriot, and he knows also, in his heart of hearts he knows, that he is only a player. Let us quote Browning, and thank God that the meanest politician boasts two soul-sides, one to face his constituents with, one to show to the man or woman who knows him. Let us thank God, for if it were otherwise the race of public men would cease to exist. They would be consumed in the fires of their own simulated fervour. And some highly interesting proceedings would be lost to the world.

It is assumed, then, that the first step has been taken, that you have got to the playing table, that you are directly under the eye

of the marker who calls the game. The fun is now about to commence, and with it the danger. You are untried, and practically unknown. The first thing to do in the circumstances is to get into opposition. The manner of doing this requires a great deal of tact and finesse. Many a man, and many a possessor of a naturally strong hand, has spoilt it irrevocably by playing a wrong card at this early stage. The probabilities are that you were carried into Parliament on a wave of enthusiasm for the Government. You were chosen to sit behind the front Ministerial Benches. Your constituents expect this of you. Now, it is just possible to do precisely what your constituents do not expect of you, and yet, not only keep their good opinion, but rise very much higher in it. This, I say, is possible, but so far from being easy, it is distinctly the hardest piece of strategy in the whole political manœuvre.

However, something has to be done. You are unknown, and far from rich; you are ambitious, and cannot afford to remain for years an obscure unit among the followers of the party in office. The fascination of

the play is upon you ; there are tens of thousands of spectators watching intently, keenly interested, waiting to applaud. The temptation to catch their eye — that large collective eye which overlooks the continent — is irresistible. You are invisible because of the Ministerial phalanx in front of and around you, and it is necessary to get clear, to break away.

The opportunity will almost certainly arrive before long. The clever gamester is he who recognises the chance when it appears and makes the most of it. You must have a certain amount of patience. It is ruinous to be too precipitate, but it will almost certainly happen, and probably before the end of your first triennial term, that the Premier will come down with certain proposals to which you are not committed before the eyes of your constituents, and which are intrinsically important enough to arouse popular feeling. This is the opportunity to break with the Government. But as you represent a government constituency you must be careful. You must go to the electors and take them into your confidence ; you must explain that after

a tremendous and heart-breaking struggle between devotion to a political leader and devotion to principle, the latter carried the day. It is well to point out — as truthfully you may do — that your threats, tears, and entreaties have been fruitless to turn the Premier from his fell purpose; that your expostulations have fallen on deaf ears. Henceforth, you may add, all personal attachments, all private longings, all political amenities, are to you as nought; all the friendships of a lifetime have been laid on the altar; for the future you live only in the endeavour humbly but unswervingly to give effect to those eternal principles in comparison with the majesty of which, the life and aspirations of the individual are as the small dust in the balance, are a not worth naming sacrifice.

Once in opposition it will be found that your sphere has extended, your reputation increased. It is now possible to marshal all your forces. Allusions can be made that would previously have been inadmissible; words can be used that before would have been treason. At this period of the game it is advisable to cultivate a method, a manner

of your own. It is desirable to be in some way *distinctive*. There is much virtue in a particular look, in a mode of speech, in a mannerism. If you have not the main thing, which is natural ability and power of carrying conviction, it is possible to get something else—something that will focus the attention of the spectators in the outer ring. Every one knows the story of the man who laughed. He has had his counterpart, and a very successful counterpart, in Australian politics. It will be recorded of one man of obscure beginnings that he was a genial, capable, extremely popular person, who laughed, and became Premier of Victoria. If laughing is not your *metier*, if it goes against the grain, it is just as effective, or even more so, to cultivate a cast-iron demeanour. The “cool, calm, strong man” has been played admirably on several occasions, by none more finely and successfully than by Mr W. H. Irvine, of Victoria. Yet another pose that will often be found extremely useful is that of the bluff devil-take-you kind of individual, as impersonated by Mr Thomas Bent, of contemporary fame, and by Sir George Dibbs,



of happy memory. The astute Cornwall in *King Lear* says some words to the effect that this kind of knave—the bluff, outspoken knave—has more craft than any other kind that could be mentioned. However that may be, the gruffly candid demeanour has proved useful in Australian politics in the past, and is likely to prove useful again. Then there is the humorous pose, of which Mr G. H. Reid furnishes the best living example. This is invaluable at times, but its successful adoption is so difficult that it cannot be generally recommended. Only the highest kind of ability should venture to undertake this manner. It may be of advantage to affect a plain, or even a dowdy, appearance. The first Federal Treasurer wore an old suit of brown clothes for a lengthy period, and with conspicuously good results. But, whatever you cultivate, whether it is the manner of the sage or the buffoon, of the circus or of the graveyard, it is necessary to cultivate something, and to cultivate it well.

With a modicum of good luck, and a sufficiency of good management, almost any one can rise to Ministerial rank in Australia,



or for that matter can obtain the highest post of vantage, namely the Premiership. The comparative shade of private membership is no sooner left behind than the game takes on still different phases. The cards are reshuffled, the partners are altered, the rules are revised. The play is as fascinating as ever—even more so—but it has become much more difficult, much more complex. One has only to reflect for a moment on the absence of any really live question in colonial politics to understand the trouble that the head of a Government must have to keep up some semblance of enthusiasm in the country, and to retain his place. There is no large Imperial question. There is no Home Rule question. There is no longer a tariff question, although there are occasional murmurings and mutterings from one or two sections of the people, and from one or two dissatisfied newspapers. It is impossible to beat up a party, either in the State or the Federal Parliament, on such lines as Imperialism, Nationalism, Jingoism, Fiscalism, Conservatism, or any other “ism” belonging to the larger domain of national affairs. What is there left to fight about?

There is very little. In three cases out of four the incoming Government takes up the measures of its predecessor. In three cases out of four the differences, other than the personal ones, are barely discernible. In this political atmosphere of Australia, Amurath with Amurath is eternally being confounded.

The rise of the Labour Party has been the most remarkable feature of the situation during the past three or four years, and the whole history of the Labour Party is the most conspicuous illustration of the general truth of what has just been said. In Opposition it has been magnificently strong and war-like. It has talked, through its leaders and its units, firmly and finely of the necessity of check-mating capitalistic greed, of nationalising industries, of abolishing the large land-owner, of setting up a State Bank, of establishing a State iron industry, of taxing the wealthy for the benefit of the poor, of granting pensions to the aged workers, of saving the weak from the strong, of improving industrial conditions, of giving every man a fair return for his labour, of shortening hours, of widening the avenues of employment, of adding something material

and tangible to the pleasures of the people. The Labour Party out of office has talked impressively of all these things—so impressively, indeed, that it has been taken at its word. During the last year or two, Labour Ministries have been in power in the Federal Parliament, in Queensland, and in Western Australia. What has happened? Where is the monopoly that has been nationalised? Where are the wages that have been increased? Where is the Bank that has been established? Where is the land tax that was promised? Where are the old age pensions in Queensland, in Western Australia or in the Federal Parliament? More than this: where are the records of any serious attempt on the part of one of the Labour Ministries of Australia to nationalise even one industry, to check capitalisation, to pay old age pensions, to run a State Bank, or to do anything that the average Liberal, or even the so-called Conservative Opposition would not cheerfully undertake? Not only has there been nothing revolutionary accomplished, but nothing revolutionary has been even tried.

To keep your place at the inner table, to

be able for any length of time to set the pace for the rest of the numerous company, it is necessary to remember that the other players, and not yourself, are the actual masters of the situation. By proceeding warily, and by showing a thorough knowledge of every unwritten rule and precept, you may get as much as a reasonable man should require. You may have the appearance, if not the substance of power, and all the honours, emoluments, lime-light and other accessories connected with it. But to attempt to run a crusade of your own, or to attempt to put into practice the sentiments you preached in opposition, is merely to commit hari-kari, to rush on your own doom. The Labour Party, or the more intelligent members of it, have found this out. My own opinion is that the Labour leader is a trifle less insincere on the whole, than the average leader of any other party or section. Yet the difference between the fighting Labourist's word in opposition and his performance in office is great and ghastly. It is not necessary to blame him. He has simply *had* to realise that Australia is in a condition, politically speaking, of being

willing to listen to everything, and of being able to accomplish nothing. It is always talking about its breathless speed, and perpetually falling down in the mud.

Undoubtedly the most humorous, the most delightful, and at the same time the most useful institution known to the continent is the Upper House, or Legislative Council. What the Premier of the day would do without this stand-by, it is barely possible to surmise. To the head of an allegedly Radical government, the Tory Chamber is always a God - send. Even the cleverest tactician finds now and again that he must press forward when in office with measures that he advocated when sitting on the left hand benches. It is an awkward predicament for many reasons. He knows that if the reform is carried, it will probably bring about a reaction, and that he himself will almost certainly be hurled from office at the next election. Yet he dare not jettison the principal plank in his fighting platform. What is he to do? Amid the storm clouds that are all round him, out of the night that encompasses him, above the tempest that is driving him irresistibly forward

there gleams one ray of light — the light of the Legislative Council. There it is, straight ahead, standing between himself and swift and sudden extinction. Confidently he presses on. His vessel triumphantly breasts the waves of the Representative House, and is dashed to pieces on the adamantine rock of the Council's inaccessibility. But he himself is safe. He gains breathing time while the fragments of his craft are being pieced together again. His constituents are satisfied. He comes back stronger than ever from the next election, and goes through the performance again.

Will any one deny that all these possibilities, all these variations, all these moves and countermoves, all these chances of success, all these risks of failure, go to make the pursuit of the political prize in Australia one of the most absorbing in which man can engage? The governing fact as already stated is that the game is not confined to a privileged class, as is practically the case in England. Subject to certain conditions, it is open to all. It is true that the possessor of a banking account has an advantage. In the language of pedestrianism, he beats the pistol ;



he gets a certain start every time. But the start is not so great that it cannot by a display of agility be overtaken. And the fact remains that the chief attraction of Australia from the player's point of view, and one of the chief risks from the point of view of the spectator, is that political competitions are conducted actually, as well as nominally, irrespective of wealth, or rank, or status in life.

It is hardly profitable to indulge in generalisation as to the kind of ability that is needed for success in public life. A certain kind of man flourishes, and another kind—the opposite kind—is seen to fall; but in a year or two the positions are reversed, and the set of qualities which seemingly commanded success are those which invite or compel failure. Therefore the generalising process is for the most part vain. But if one were asked to name the attribute that is most useful to an Australian politician—the attribute that it is ruinous to be without—one might be tempted to mention knowledge of human nature. The phrase implies a great deal. It implies such characteristics as tact, foresight, and sense of



the fitness of things ; power of being genial, or of seeming to be genial ; knowledge of when to strike, and when to refrain from striking. It means the capacity to put yourself in the place of those for whom you are legislating, to whom you are appealing. It suggests in the possessor a degree of intellect, combined with a degree of sensibility. It is the opposite of narrowness, of bigotry, of fanaticism, and of folly of the more glaring kind.

A second quality to be considered eminently desirable is that of accessibility. In the vernacular this is usually called "absence of frill." It is an asset well-nigh indispensable for any successful public man in Australia, though it must not be confounded—as it sometimes is—with lack of dignity. Most of the leaders of ministries and heads of parties that I have met in Australia have been, and are, extremely dignified ; and, as a rule, the most dignified have been the most accessible. It is not the kind of dignity that surrounds itself with much outward pomp and ornament ; not the kind that emulates Mr Forcible Feeble, and proclaims its existence as loudly as possible, for fear that it should be overlooked. It

is the dignity that results from mental processes not visible to the eye of the vulgar. It can unbend, jest, laugh, look stern, wear the mask of folly or any other mask, because it is sure of itself. The fortifications of reserve, and the serried front of isolation, utilised by the typical English Prime Minister, are not wanted in Australia. Here the obscure unit and the political chief meet on equal social terms, to the advantage not merely of the one, but of the other as well.

A third qualification which may be mentioned as very desirable, if not as absolutely necessary, has been already alluded to as the gift of speech. To accomplish much in public life in Australia, it is necessary to talk, and to talk a great deal. Whether it is on a platform or in the open air ; whether it is within the walls of Parliament or outside them, you must, if you desire to become well known, tell the public something, and *keep on* telling it to them. The Australians are quick, impressionable, receptive - minded. Their highest awards are given, in nine cases out of ten, to the man who can appeal to them in the most direct, the most personal, and the most intelligible way.

The four men who have held office as Prime Minister of the Commonwealth form, in the aggregate and as individuals, the best illustrations of the qualities just enumerated. Each has displayed a sound knowledge of human nature, evidencing the knowledge by his many-sidedness, his tact, his judgement, his mingled daring and caution, his willingness to compromise. Each has made himself readily approachable, alike to indignant people who had grievances to ventilate, to friendly people who had congratulations to utter, to newspaper people who had questions to ask—in fact to all sorts and conditions of people who used the right means of approach. And each has been endowed with the gift of speech. Two of them—Mr Reid and Mr Deakin—have exhibited it in a singular and superlative degree. Sir Edmund Barton is a speaker of the very front rank. Even Mr Watson, though not a fiery, forensic orator, is a very able debater. Only those who have heard and watched him in Parliament know how keen and capable and resourceful he really is. Quite apart from these individual instances, facts may be found to show that one may

apply over the whole field of Federal and State politics the conclusions just arrived at.

To be a prominent public man in Australia it is not necessary to do great things, but to act as though you could do them, or wished to do them, or would be certain of doing them if you got the chance.

'Tis not what man *does* which exalts him, but  
what man *would* do.

Achievement is dangerous, or fatal; the promise of achievement is brilliant or inspiring. The truth of the matter is that Australians are engaged, individually and collectively, in a game of which they cannot see the end. Politically speaking, they don't yet know where they are, or where within the course of a generation they are likely to arrive.

## V

### PSEUDO-LITERARY

This world's no blot for us,  
Nor blank ; it means intensely and means good :  
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.

It is strange that a people possessed of literary instincts, and of the literary temper, should be without a literature of their own ; but so it is. The shadow of a remembered personality does indeed flit now and then across the brief page of Australian history. There was a writer of verses named Lindsay Gordon, and a novelist of repute named Marcus Clarke. Each of these struck out a path for himself. Each left a record that will not soon be forgotten. But neither was a product of the Southern Hemisphere ; neither could be described as native, "and to the manner born" ; and neither of the two, nor both together, could be credited with creating a literature for the country in which their work was done.

It is true there have been, and there are,

others of note. There was a poet who wrote some very fine lines about the yellow-haired September, about waste places of Kerguelen, about lost Lorraines, about a frail, flower-like, dead Araluen, and about much besides. It would argue ignorance of the subject to be unaware that the book of rhymes beginning with an account of the man from "Snowy River" has sold to the extent of 30,000 copies, or more. There is the statement, made on what seems reliable authority, that the author of *Our Selection* was paid for a continuation of that work the remarkable sum of £500. And Victor Daley was, until a few months ago, alive amongst us. The torch of inspiration is, therefore, not quite gone out. Throughout the continent it flickers and falters, never shining with a steady and continuous flame, rarely giving the wayfarer a light to guide him, but every now and then dancing with a faint, fleeting, will-of-the-wisp quality before his astonished eyes.

He sees a reflection, or he catches an echo, and then he is in the dark.

Of rhymes and storyettes there are any number in Australia. The local printing

presses shed them in great profusion. They are more numerous than leaves in Vallambrosa, or than wattle blossoms in September. Nor is their musical and poetic quality to be despised. Many of them—the majority of them — are ephemeral and worthless; but taking them either in the aggregate, or in the unit, they represent a fairly high journalistic standard. Frequently can there be discovered among them a new image, a clever piece of workmanship, even an original idea. Their metrical quality is often admirable. In the Melbourne *Argus* there have been many good verses—verses so good that one regrets they should have been consigned to so perishable a receptacle as a penny print. For genuine melody, of something better than a topical sort, one would not go further than the lines written to a light-footed, golden-haired, pathetically - dead, dancing girl — lines that bring her back among the living:—

When the scene is lighted brightly, and we  
watch the players nightly,  
The peasant, and the prince, and the page.

The patriotic note has been struck often, sometimes clumsily, and sometimes with good



effect. Mr Essex Evans gives it a local application in the rather formal verses beginning :—

Awake ! Arise ! The wings of Dawn  
Are beating at the gates of Day.

And another Australian writer gives it an Imperial significance when he says of England, in lines that have been much praised and incidentally awarded a substantial monetary prize by a London paper, that :—

She triumphs, moving slowly down the years.

Again, for pure romance we have Daley's fantasy, with its very fine exordium :—

The bright lights fade out one by one  
And like a peony,  
Drowning in wine, the crimson sun  
Sinks down in that strange sea.

For a compound of sensuousness and sadness and lyric sweetness, we have Von Kotze's *Island Lover* with its invocation, and its lament :—

Oh, Tuahina, that youth's full measure  
Should pass away like a summer's eve !  
That just the one gift that women treasure  
Should be so helpless, so poor, and leave  
A hint of sweetness, a taste of pleasure  
And—grey-hued twilight to mourn and grieve !

These are only a few specimens, somewhat above the average as regards workmanship and finish, but representative of what the continent is producing every day.

So far as prose is concerned, the Australian topical and occasional writer can hold his head up in any company. If you want a scene described, if you want an incident related, if you want the pith of a situation dexterously extracted, if you want an impression vividly conveyed, if you want to catch from the paper the spirit and atmosphere of a crowd, of a race-meeting, of a procession, of a play, of a joke, of a tragedy, of a wedding, of a funeral ; if you want any or all of these things, there are a score or two of men in Australia who will supply the requirement as well as it can be supplied anywhere in the world.

But to say this is not to say there is a national literature. The term, it must be remembered, means something more than a few dexterous verses, a few patches of local colour, and a few characters that can be held up to admiration as "racy of the soil." That last phrase hangs like a pall over the continent. If it were only possible to forget that there is

such a thing as a gum-tree in Australia the average quality of the writing—particularly of the more ambitious and sustained kind of writing—would considerably improve. If a national literature implies anything, it implies the correct artistic and adequate expression of the country's thought and action; it signifies the outward and visible form of what is real and vital and permanent in the inner and intellectual life of a people. In other words it is alien to what is merely topical and incidental. It is not a record of the peculiarities of shearers and rouseabouts, or of the feats of jockeys or stock-drovers. America would hardly be a literary country if it had to rely exclusively on Bret Harte and Mark Twain. England would not be literary if it had only Mr Punch and Mr Bernard Shaw. And Australia, so long as its most characteristic and successful compositions deal with the obvious peculiarities of a few local people, cannot really be said to have a literature deserving of the name.

The position of things is curious. There is on the continent a population of four million people, possessing a complete net-work of

state schools, high schools, art schools, academies, universities, professorships, and chairs of learning innumerable. Education is both free and compulsory. Complete illiteracy is almost unknown. The ignorance and stolidity of the London docker, of the Irish peasant, of the Russian serf, of the central European farm labourer, have no equivalent in Australia. The people of this country are facile and quick-minded. They turn naturally to pen and ink. The writer's ambition is rampant among them. It is more insidious and more pervading even than stage fever or cricket frenzy. Every second dwelling of the middle class is cumbered with unfinished or unpublished manuscripts. If the son is not guilty, it is probably the daughter, or the governess, or the parent. Every newspaper editor, if he felt disposed, could each day fill his columns ten times over with contributions submitted by outsiders. A Sydney paper offered last year a hundred pound prize for a serial story. The result was a staggering mass of manuscript, weighing in the aggregate more than half a ton, the work of one hundred and thirty-four unknown and previously

unsuspected authors. The same set of circumstances repeats itself indefinitely. Most Australians have ideas which seem to the possessors original. They want a vehicle of expression, and they rush impetuously to the only one provided.

Yet the result is not great, or satisfying, or impressive. And the reason is that the goal of all this endeavour—in so far as it is a serious and sustained endeavour—is the hall-mark of the English publisher. No one can compute the number of people in Melbourne and Sydney, to say nothing of those in the country towns, who have either accomplished, or are at present meditating, a descent on London with an unpublished manuscript. The objective of the literary person is always London. The recognised fount of honour is London. The banners in the literary sky wave always in the vicinity of Paternoster Row and of Leicester Square. Henry Kendall, who knew what he was talking about, wrote feelingly of things that may happen to "the man of letters here." And circumstances have not materially altered since Kendall had his furniture sold under him, and since he sat all night on doorsteps

in a suburb of Melbourne. While confident enough in most things, Australians have shown no confidence in their own literary judgement. They still look timidly and obediently towards the other hemisphere. If their man of talent can get an English publisher to take him up, they smile with fatuous approval. If he cannot, they pity and despise him. As a consequence the Daleys and Quinns and Lawsons who have chosen to rely, for the most part, on the country of their upbringing, and who have carried their wares, for the most part, to a local market, have found it hard to make a living. Had they been obliged to rely exclusively on literature their living would have been a precarious one indeed.

These facts are so obvious that it is unnecessary to dwell upon them. But a word has to be said for the other side. The Australian publisher, like the Australian manufacturer, or the Australian politician, has his interests at home. It is part of his policy, part also of his desire, to encourage the literature of the country in which he lives. But he has *paid* so frequently for doing this that he is now extremely wary. For a local author to tempt



him is the hardest task in the world. The publisher's suspicions, founded on bitter experience, have communicated themselves in some subtle fashion to the possible purchaser, and to the country at large. At the present time it would puzzle a psychologist to say which has the greater fear and distrust of the other — the Australian author of the Australian publisher, or the Australian publisher of the Australian author. The present writer has seen men in the witness box, and in the criminal dock, and has noted the guilty and self-accusing look on some of their faces. But for a spectacle of absolute doubt and misgiving, for a written confession of wrong about to be committed, for an unspoken avowal that the act in contemplation is one of the blackest and meanest in the calendar, commend him to the individual who, hailing from Australia, stands up before an Australian publisher and admits that he has perpetrated a manuscript with a view to it seeing the light of day.

The result is what might have been expected. The people are going through a transition stage, a transition stage which, to use a mild paradox, threatens to become permanent.



They are quick to appreciate cleverness, and, as readily as any other, that form of it which finds expression in print. But they want to know where they are. They dislike risks, and more especially intellectual risks. Before they begin the task of assimilating a work of any length they desire the assurance of some one in authority that the labour is not to be in vain. They want the imprimatur of an English critic, or of an English public. They appreciate good writing, and many of them know how to write, but the confidence which is a mark of most of their pursuits, of their virtues and their vices, deserts them entirely when it is a question of estimating the worth of books written by their own countrymen in their midst.

Hence a result that can be seen and read of all men. The gospel of brevity is proclaimed everywhere. It has become recognised that the longer and more ambitious efforts of imagination or of erudition have not much chance of emerging into the daylight; and that even if they do emerge, they have a still more remote chance of paying expenses, much less of winning a profit for the ambitious author. The short article may, however, prove

remunerative. An editor who would be aggrieved and insulted by the very suggestion of something three columns long will put down his spectacles and smile almost cheerfully at the unknown scribe who tenders him a column. The publisher who is firmly convinced that the bearer of a full-length manuscript novel is a person to be shunned like the plague, will listen with an open mind to proposals having to do with skits and humorous episodes, with short stories and novelettes.

From all this can be deduced the reason of the spasmodic quality, the flashiness of the writing that is done in Australia. The warm climate and the tired feeling may have something to do with the phenomenon; but the main causes are those previously mentioned. It is now apparent why the journalism of the country is one of its more admirable features. The newspaper man has no time to waste, and no space to give away. He must get his effects into narrow compass. He must, to employ the vernacular, come at once to the points and leave out the superfluous verbiage. He endeavours to do so, and often with much success. The publisher of books does not

want him, but if he wishes to be original he can be so—to the extent of a column. If he wishes to be humorous he can be so—to the same limit. If his vein is descriptive he has the like opportunity—which runs also to the extent of one column. On the approaches to every printing machine in the country, the word “Brevity” is blazoned in letters of dread significance. The Duke of Wellington’s admonition to his chaplain “Be brief” rings sharply through the pseudo-literary atmosphere of Australia.

It would savour of affectation to ignore the existence of the *Sydney Bulletin*, or to attempt to deny that it is an important semi-intellectual factor in the life of the continent. The circumstance is unfortunate, and that for obvious reasons. The *Bulletin* combines in itself most of what is smart, and flashy, and cynical, and superficial, and verbally witty in the people among whom it circulates. Now, if a man happens to be very smart and very witty, and very cynical, we may admit that he is a clever and interesting person. We may hand him the laurel wreath of contemporary fame and journalistic renown with no other feeling than one of pure appreciation

and good-will. But when his smartness and his flashiness and his cynicism are set up as models for every one else to *copy*; when they are watered down among a thousand imitators and served up every week with slight variations, or with no variations at all; when we find half the educated people of a country trying to be smart and flashy, because they imagine that by so doing they will be able to fit their ideas into the narrow columns of a certain publication—then we are bound to wonder whether we in Australia are really an intelligent, right-thinking nation, or a number of animated and extremely foolish marionettes.

It is the readers of the paper, rather than the paper itself, who are to blame. The sins of the copyists must rest on their own heads. And while we get tired of certain characteristics that are always repeating themselves, we are bound to admit the invaluable work that the Sydney paper has done in more than one direction. By encouraging certain writers—by gaining for them an audience and winning for them a reputation—it has conferred a favour on the whole of Australia. It is the kind of favour that can hardly be reckoned

out on a monetary basis. Nine-tenths of that which is musical and distinctive and valuable in Australian verse of the last twenty years owes its publicity, if not its existence, to the *Bulletin*. To say this is to say a great deal. It stands to the lasting discredit of rich proprietary newspapers of this country that they have invariably leaned towards the reprint and the borrowed article. They have never made what could be called a decisive stand on behalf of the struggling, underpaid man of talent who has taken off his hat in their managerial sanctum, or has left his wares on their guarded doorstep. They have never championed this man; but the *Bulletin* has always championed him. A paper that has done this can be forgiven much. It can be forgiven the army of cheap paragraphists, the tawdry tiresomeness of repeated phrase, the forced ingenuity of distorted facts, the constant disparagement of the kindred nation over-sea.

There is *some* soul of goodness in things evil  
Would man observingly distil it out.

And the truth of this in the case of the *Bulletin* we would be the last to impugn.

Although it must be repeated that there is

no such thing as a national literature, there are at least three distinct schools—perhaps it would be more correct to say distinct *forms* of writing—in Australia. The first of these is what might be called the humorous, descriptive style. This may be a poor thing, but it is our own. Some kinship may be claimed for it with the method of Mark Twain and his disciples—the method, that is to say, of calm and grotesque exaggeration. Nor is it wholly unconnected with the thunder-and-lightning, vividly blasphemous style of Rudyard Kipling in his earlier days. But it is in character and essence neither American nor English; it is distinctively Australian. We have evolved it, and should take the credit or discredit of it. To be a successful writer of the descriptively humorous kind it is merely necessary to attend to a few simple rules. It is necessary to get together as many adjectives as you can, and always to apply them in a context unlike that to which they have grown accustomed. Thus, if you are describing something tragic and awful—say, a murder—it is a good plan to make use of such adjectives as commonly do duty for an



artistic criticism or a musical performance. Conversely, if you are dealing with a drama, or a piece of music, it is useful to have at hand the terms most frequently employed in connection with a murder. String together all the unlikely and dissimilar phrases you can invent or remember; make a liberal and generous use of "and's" and "also's"; be prodigal of semicolons and sparing of full-stops; above all cultivate an appearance of abruptness and of brevity. Men have been known to score a brilliant reputation, and, incidentally, to get long manuscripts accepted, merely by leaving out the pronoun at the beginning of a sentence, and thus giving an air of curtness and epigrammatic force to their composition. Stick at nothing, spare nothing, be afraid of nothing, and your fame as a descriptively humorous writer is assured.

There is another school, which may be called the flippant school. It must not be confused with the one just mentioned. The flippant school is mainly the preserve and playground of women. The lady journalists of Australia are as fond of a varnish of cynicism on their social writings as certain



of their sisters are of a suggestion of rouge on their faces. The amusing part of it is that in neither case does the deception deceive any one. A few years ago there lived a woman named Ina Wildman, who wrote under the pseudonym of Sappho Smith. A gifted woman she was, with a wonderful eye for bizarre effects and a mind like a scintillating surface of light. She was a conspicuous journalistic success, and deserved to be. The *Sydney Bulletin* discovered her, and deserves the credit of the discovery. But one penalty of success is persistent imitation. The truism has in her case been proved up to the hilt. It matters nothing to Sappho Smith—she is beyond the reach of that kind of vexation—but it is distressing to the patriotic Australian to find so many of his countrywomen rushing pell-mell into a literary groove that can only be safely trodden by those possessed of quite singular ability and quite exceptional discernment. Over all of the larger Melbourne and Sydney journals there is now the trail of the flippant woman writer. Not a line of the product rings true. Every word of it is imitation. Whether it is a wedding, or an engage-

ment, or an infant baptism, or a crush at Government House, or a Lady Mayoress's reception, or an afternoon tea-party, or a display of new millinery, or a theatre, or a football match, the Sappho Smiths of these times bring to bear the same set of phrases, the same slap-dash methods, the same cynical suggestion of a *roué* of seventy in a garden of growing girls. This style of composition is specially remarkable when the topic is a wedding. If the Australian woman expressed her real thoughts about a wedding she would speak of it as the most tragic and fateful, the most joyous and the most serious event on earth. But when she gets a pen in her hand she finds it necessary to revel in the slang of two continents. For this the example of the *Bulletin* and of its greatest woman contributor is mainly to blame.

Then, in the third place, we have the erotic school. This also has certain Australian characteristics. These manifest themselves not in the prose, but in the verse of the country. The local rhymester has been more than once exhorted to give the rein to his fancies—to let himself go. The advice is not uncongenial,

even apart from the fact that he has probably been reading Swinburne, and is more or less under the influence of the master mind. A certain biblical institution was told that it was condemned, because it was luke-warm. The reproach can hardly be levied against the youthful poets who fill unvalued spaces of the print that is their medium for the time being. Amid all this intensity — bogus intensity, be it understood—there is very seldom the note of contentment, still less of genuine mirth. Australia is a bright, sunlit, open, and breezy country; but the minor poets that it produces in abundance have, for the most part, gloom dwelling in their inmost souls. The Australian child of the Muses is willing enough to clasp his Amaryllis to his palpitating breast, and to tell every one who likes to listen about the subtle and permeating sweetness of her eyes and lips and hair; but at the next moment, or in the very same breath, he is inviting us to contemplate a desolated life, a dead body, a tombstone, or a grave. In the verse of this people intense eroticism and profound melancholy are continually blended. The Northerner may, on the average, be less

fluent and less imaginative, but he seems, when at his best, to develop a finer idealism, a better thought. He writes in the *Pall Mall Gazette* :—

Lean, love, a little nearer ; shine, moon, a little clearer ;  
You cannot make her dearer, or a thousandth part more  
    fair,  
But only you can show me the kisses she would throw me,  
The guardian angels that shall go before me everywhere.

While his fellow rhymester in Australia alternates between telling us in a burst of fervour that

Hilda's kisses seem in German  
Just as sweet as any way—

And most tragically exclaiming :—

God ! the irony of bringing her with garments wet and  
    clinging  
Close to my feet that lagged for her upon the sands  
    alone—

The better English journal can teach the better Australian journal nothing in respect of *technique* ; but there is sometimes an artistic restraint about the one which the other might copy without suffering any loss. It is well, however, to recognise the day of small things, looking to the day when greater things will

come to pass. From Dan to Beersheba everything is not barren ; in fact there are springs and oases in cheerful profusion. And it must be remembered that if Australia, with all its effervescence of youth and ambition, has not yet found its intellectual footing, it is merely exemplifying a familiar stage in the life of man, which has a counterpart and analogy in the larger life of a nation.

## VI

### ADAM LINDSAY GORDON

Life is mostly froth and bubble,  
Two things stand like stone ;  
Kindness in another's trouble,  
Courage in your own.

SINCE the finding of his body on the Brighton beach one morning, thirty-five years ago, the fame of Gordon has been steadily growing. He is the acknowledged Australian poet ; but what do his countrymen really know about him ? Considering all things, the literature that has to do with him is meagre and inadequate. There is the appreciation of Francis Adams—good, on the whole, but fragmentary, and too exclusively insistent on the merits of one poem. There is the life of Gordon, told briefly, with a few strictly orthodox comments, in the book of Messrs Turner and Sutherland. There is also the work of Mr Desmond Byrne—correct, but formal, and consequently little read. Of late years the daily or weekly journalist has taken a fancy to revive interest in the poet, and to bring under notice some fresh phase or incident in his life. But there

is yet a great deal that could be said. For the present the average Englishman knows nothing of Gordon, and even the well-read Englishman knows only the name attached to some galloping rhymes. The Australian is familiar with the name of Lindsay Gordon, and is not lacking in appreciation, but as often as not he reserves his praises for what is least admirable and least characteristic.

To think of Gordon is to think of a succession of pictures on an always darkening screen. The opening vistas are rose-coloured ; but each successive glance at the moving canvas leaves on the mental retina an image more gloomy than the one before it. The result of the life itself was a great tragedy ; the result of the work was a signal triumph. The contrast between these two—between this splendid artistic success and this dire personal failure—have helped to create for Gordon a sympathy and affection out of proportion to the amount, though scarcely out of keeping with the quality of his writing. He resembles somewhat the fleeting figure in Shelley's *Adonais* :—

A pard-like spirit beautiful and wild,  
A joy in desolation masked.



The spirit was beautiful, but the joy—what visitations there were of it—was always hedged round with desolation. And the tendency was always away from the light, instead of towards it; the clouds were always gathering as the day went on.

Yet the series of views thrown upon the moving screen begins brightly. On an island of the Azores, amid surroundings which rest the eye and charm the sense, a child is growing up to manhood. Listen to what his father, a retired army officer, says of Lindsay Gordon:—"A sweet little fellow he is! indeed, I think him almost too pretty. Very slight and upright, carrying his little curly head well back, and almost swaggering along. He talks with a sweet, full, laughing voice, and a face dimpled and bright as the morning. He is seen here, perhaps, to too great an advantage, in very light clothing, scampering amid the large and airy playrooms." This is the opening picture of the series, and there is no suggestion of shadow about it. The promise is of a life healthful and happy, proof against all morbid fancies, singularly unfettered, mentally and physically free.

But the operator is busily at work ; and he quickly changes the landscape from the Azores to England. The next glimpse of Gordon is that of a youth on the deck of a ship outward bound for Australia. The rose and gold tints are less noticeable now, but there is still no occasion for excess of sympathy. There is every reason why the young man of twenty should find a prosperous career in the new and rapidly developing continent. He stands on the deck of a ship with the salt spray of the channel blowing a keen reviving breath upon his forehead. The light of imagination is in his eyes. The flush of expectation is on his face. It is not a situation to merit sympathy, even though home and England are soon to vanish on the sky-line. Only—and the shadow will assert itself a little here—there is a morbid tendency, possibly associated in some fashion with the state of mind of his mother, who has developed a form of religious melancholia. And Gordon's mother and father are first cousins. It is a circumstance of sinister omen.

Once the life in Australia has begun, the unseen hand that is manipulating the screen

makes feverish haste to get forward. Two years of experience as a member of the South Australian mounted police are passed rapidly in review. There is a following period of seven years; but this also need not delay the onlookers. It shows the young man of destiny carrying on business as a professional horse-breaker, and incidentally writing verses. His means are limited; his social advantages non-existent; his opportunities of intellectual intercourse and improvement practically nil. During these first nine years in Australia the spectre of inherited melancholia, though never quite in the ascendant, is never entirely laid. Yet the life must have had its compensations. The recollection of many a lonely ride, of many a starry midnight, of many a breaking sunrise, of many a drifting fancy, wild and subtle as the music of the *Spectre Bride*, are conveyed in the spirit rather than in the words of verses that Gordon wrote at this period of his life.

Then, for a brief space, there are indications of a turn of the tide. Fortune ceases to frown. It seems desirous all at once of petting Gordon, of consoling him, of giving

him fresh chances, of making up to him what nature and heredity had taken away. It flings into his lap a legacy of £7,000 ; it makes him a member of the Legislature of his colony ; it wins him success and fame as a cross-country rider, as a master of that daring game which can always be relied upon to draw the wildest plaudits from the crowd. But even this mood, this smiling, flattering, relenting mood, does not avail. And as a matter of fact, it does not last. The legacy is lost in speculation ; the Parliamentary career is abandoned ; the steeplechase successes are punctuated with accident and failure. The sands begin to run downward faster than before.

There is just one picture, in the dissolving series, on which it is sometimes tempting to linger. Gordon is by this time thirty-seven years old. He is without robust health, without money, and without regular employment. It is quite true that he can write verses ; he is not altogether confident about them, but he believes they are good verses. One or two people who ought to know have praised them. But these Melbourne publishers will pay nothing for them ; no doubt, the

author admits, because they would lose money if they did. What is a man to do whose health is shaky, and who has nothing but unpaid bills and unpublished verses in his pocket? He dare not dwell on the prospect; it must at all cost be forgotten, pressed back, kept out of sight.

There is one man who will help him to forget, and that man is Henry Clarence Kendall. The two meet in Collins Street, Melbourne, on the last morning but one of Gordon's life. It is a meeting pleasant to think about, pleasant to dwell upon. For Kendall at least appreciates, and Kendall understands. That appreciation is warmly, generously, enthusiastically expressed, and it must convey a great deal to Lindsay Gordon, though he is to die by his own hand next day. For to the true poet the clamorous praise of the crowd means very little. If there is any elysium for him on earth, it is found in the recognition of the few whose knowledge and perceptions are not of the earth, earthy. Perhaps for an hour or two while he talked with Kendall in the Melbourne hotel, and drank with him the drink, both of

the successful and the despairing, perhaps for a moment he had an *inkling* of the truth that he had not lived altogether in vain.

It is never easy to estimate a man's place in the domain of poetry. It is practically impossible in his lifetime, and it is difficult after he is dead. There is not merely the metrical, formal quality, not merely the imaginative power, not merely the originality of treatment that have to be considered. The whole question of individual taste and temperament, whether of the writer or the reader, is at work upon the scales. It may be impossible to prove on mathematical lines that Gordon was a great poet. Yet it can be asserted confidently that his verse is marked by three qualities which between them go a long way to make up greatness. These are its spontaneity, its musical quality, and its refinement. Everything else is included under one or other of these three heads.

To take the first of the three—spontaneity, Gordon was above all things a natural singer. This naturalness, this unforced quality, is undoubtedly his first and his finest merit. He hoped for nothing—at least for nothing



tangible—from his verses. In one sense, he did not wish to write. He much preferred action. If some one had given him a troop of cavalry and shown him a battery of opposing artillery, he would, in the rush and forgetfulness of one wild, sweeping movement, have experienced more real life, more real pleasure, than he was ever destined to know. Such an experience might have laid once and for ever the ghosts that always haunted him; might have made him feel that he was born to act, as his soldier-fathers had acted, instead of being obliged to sit down in a strange land and listen to memories of action that sang fitfully through his brain. It is for this reason—for the reason that temperament, and heredity, and poetic impulse forced him to find relief in verse whether he wished to or not, whether he was proud of the performance or ashamed of it—that he occupies his unique place. The pen and ink processes are invisible in his best work; it is as though

A wistful, wandering zephyr presses  
The strings of some Æolian lyre.

To illustrate the spontaneous manner of Gordon would be to run through a complete list of his published poems. There is no need



to go much further than the opening lines of *The Rhyme of Joyous Garde*. It is instructive to notice how in this, as in others of his poems, the picture seems to create itself:—

Through the lattice rushes the south wind, dense  
With fumes of the flowery frankincense  
And hawthorn blossoming thickly.

No preparations, no apologies, no preliminary turning and scraping; only the rush of a few lines which sweep the reader, whether he likes it or not, into the enchanted world of dreams. Equally natural, and quite as resistless, is the sentiment of *Podas Okus*. Here again we feel, so to speak, the pulse-beat of the inevitable; we get again the impression that Gordon could not help the writing; that he himself, and not the Greek, is lying at a tent's entrance; that for him the hues of sunset are blending with the brief glories of an almost vanished life; that it is he, and not Achilles, who murmurs to the golden-haired Briseis:—

Place your hand in mine, and listen,  
While the strong soul cleaves its way  
Through the death mist hovering o'er me,  
As the strong ship cleaves the wave,  
To my fathers gone before me,  
To the gods who love the brave.

The musical quality of Gordon is a kindred though a distinct merit. A poet may be natural and spontaneous without being particularly musical, just as he may achieve a musical result by what are manifestly artificial means. A lyric poet must, however, aim at musical effect. If he fails to attain this, he is not what he professes to be. Does the reader receive an impression of melody? Does it please him? Does he carry it away with him? These are some of the questions by which the writer of verses must always be judged. The novelty, or even the abstract merit of the idea does not matter so much. Occasionally, as in Swinburne's *Triumph of Time*, there are to be found some striking ideas wedded to lines that are musically splendid. Occasionally, as in the same author's *Ballad of Dreamland*, there is delicate and subtle harmony, associated only with the faint flicker of an idea. The school of self-styled poets founded by *Euphues* made the cardinal mistake of supposing that the form of expression mattered little; that their chief business was to get hold of fresh fancies, and previously unheard-of conceits. We know better than that nowadays. We

can put up with the old idea if the treatment is artistic enough and musical enough. In lyric poetry the new or the startling idea creates a kind of metaphysical check, and is not really wanted. In Gordon there is enough of the familiar, enough of the sentimental idea to satisfy every-day requirements, while there is musical quality enough to proclaim the genuine lyric poet. The man had a sensitive ear. It is rarely that he strikes discordant notes. His versification is not flawless; it is not always of the quality of *The Swimmer* or of the *Autumn Song*, but in reading him one feels that Australia has produced a poet in whom there dwelt the rare faculty of music, the genuine gift of melodic form.

The third distinguishing attribute of Gordon is his refinement. This is a word that has come to require explanation. It has some rather unfortunate associations. A young ladies' academy is nothing if not refined. Bunthorne, in *Patience*, is extremely refined. The heroes of Richardson and of Miss Burney are refinement itself. When the term is applied to a man or an author in these days, it is necessary to be explicit in order to avoid

misunderstanding. One of the merits of Gordon, and one that must tend to make the memory of the man loved, even more than his poetry is admired, is the habit of thought which reflects a fine and clear and elevated temperament; a temperament, that does not lend itself to vice; a temperament, in other words, that is refined. To say that Gordon was so constituted is not to say that he lacked emotional strength or force. He had abundance of either. He had also passion, though it was a passion that ran to self-restraint, to fatalism, and to sombre thought. It never brought him to realism, or even to the verge of it. When he follows a certain impulse and writes :—

From a long way off to look at your charms  
Made my blood run redder in every vein,  
While he—he has held you long in his arms,  
And kissed you over and over again—

he is going as far as his finer nature will let him go in the painting of pictures dear to the fleshly school. It is almost incredible that a lyric poet who had come under the influence of Shelley and Swinburne should go no further

than this. But Gordon's verses are not like most other love verses—they show no indulgence in that more blatant form of sensualism which will insist on its red lips and its soft arms, on its tropic midnights and its reiterated embraces. It is only "from a long way off" that he looks upon the vision splendid; he never vulgarises it by coming too near it; in the better and more enduring sense of the word, he is refined.

To understand Gordon it is necessary to remember that his was a dual personality. First of all he was a man of action. He wrote as a man who loved action, for other men who loved action. There was enough of the soldier about him, enough of ingrained modesty, or of patrician reserve, to make him rather ashamed of a parade of his own feelings. It was very much finer, to his way of thinking, to *do* something than merely to write about something. He lived much on horseback and rode in many races, because the speed of a steeplechase could persuade him for a moment that he was acting; could make him forget the piping times in which he lived. But while all his

sympathy and all his desires were towards action, his temperament was largely that of the dreamer. It is a rare combination, and one that explains a great deal. When he put his dreams into words—when he set his fancy free in such compositions as *Doubtful Dreams*, *Cui Bono*, *A Song of Autumn*, and others of the kind, it did not occur to him that he was doing anything remarkable. It did not seem to him that fame was to be won in that way. It did not appeal to him that this class of work might call forth rarer qualities, might establish a better claim to gratitude and remembrance, than could the actions of the man who went with a tomahawk into the wilderness, or of the man who led a forlorn hope right up to the cannon's mouth. He wrote not so much to please others as to please himself, and because he was unable to be always silent. He wrote because voices that sang through him would not remain dumb.

There are three classes into which his poetry can be divided. The first and the largest class is that in which the man of action preponderates.



These are the verses that tell of deeds of daring, most of them accomplished on horseback. The lines have about them the genuine ring of saddle and sabre. The air seems to be rushing past as one reads them. Almost the whole of what praise or credit came to Gordon in his lifetime was due to what he wrote about men on horseback. Even now he is known to the great majority of his countrymen by such verses as *How we beat the Favourite*, *The Roll of the Kettledrum*, *From the Wreck*, and others of the kind. Poetry of this description may not be the highest possible, but Gordon did it very well. He did it so well that he may be said to have beaten all competitors in this particular line—and that despite his uneven quality, and his occasional lapses into the inartistic and the commonplace. His friend Kendall raised an incredulous smile by writing in the *Australasian* that the shy and reserved man who said so little and rode so well was superior to Whyte Melville in the latter's special domain. It was thought then that a compliment had been paid to Gordon; it



would be considered now that the compliment was wholly to Whyte Melville. The Australian has out-distanced most of his rivals; but he did not know of the fact in his lifetime, and on the banks of the Styx he may not much care.

Of all these poems of action there is none better, perhaps none quite so fine as regards conception and execution, as the *Romance of Britomarte*. It is a remarkable piece of work. The artistic finish of it does not strike the reader while he is reading. To watch a really fine actor is to forget he is acting; to listen to a tale that is properly told is to forget the teller. It is rarely, indeed, that the mechanical processes do not obtrude themselves. Of genius there has never yet been a satisfactory definition; but the word may surely be reserved for the man or woman who can write a book, or act a piece, or compose a poem, of such quality that the reader or onlooker will forget for the moment everything but that which is placed before him. It is almost impossible to begin reading *Britomarte* and to put it down unfinished,

or to be conscious of anything but the dramatic interest of the story. The verve and swing of the opening lines

I'll tell you a story—but pass the jack,  
And let us make merry to-night, my men—

carry the reader on a rushing wave from beginning to close. It is a tale of great and successful daring, purporting to be told by the chief actor himself; but no crudeness, or bad taste, or braggadocio mars the effect. Thinking of such a piece one forgets to be sorry for the author. Irrespective of fame, or the lack of fame, he must have known that the work was good; he must have known that criticism could neither help it, nor harm it; he must have experienced the joy of creation, which comes only to certain natures, and not often to them.

On the second class of his poetry, which may be described as fatalism set to music, opinions are likely to differ widely. The majority of people prefer *How we Beat the Favourite* to *Doubtful Dreams*, but then the majority of people have from time immemorial

been the worst judges of poetry. These verses that belong to the second class—the class not of action, but of brooding fancy—are well represented by the piece entitled *The Swimmer*. All the philosophy in them is contained in the four lines:—

A little season of light and laughter,  
Of love and leisure, and pleasure and pain,  
And a horror of outer darkness after,  
And dust returneth to dust again.

All the music of them is exemplified in the same piece, for example in the lines commencing:—

I would that with sleepy, soft embraces  
The sea would fold me, would find me rest  
In luminous depths of her secret places  
In gulfs where her marvels are manifest.

They are melancholy and mystic, and not hopefully inspiring, these verses in which the writer seeks to link the unsatisfactory present with the unknown beyond. Yet they have a sweetness of their own. The strings that throbbed in Gordon to the touch of his mother, the Night, have, indeed, a siren quality, akin

to the lute of Orpheus when heard on the eve of everlasting sleep in the garden of Prosperinë. Preferable sometimes to the utterance of a noisy and blatant optimism—finer than the blare of brass instruments or the shouting of crowds—is the voice of the reed shaken by the wind.

As a final word something may be said of Gordon's third and highest class of achievement, namely his blending in verse of the active *with* the melancholic temper. He could do two things: he could write of action, and he could write of sadness. Now and again he combines in one poem all that is best and most distinctive in these two sides of his nature. There are times when he devotes his verse to enterprises of some kind, to feats on horseback, or to feats in war. There are other times when he discards action, and lets the sombre mood of the moment envelop him. The hour of his greatest and rarest inspiration is when he mixes the action with the sentiment; when he unites the warrior with the poet; when he fuses in the same fire the contrasted (but not necessarily antagonistic)

temperaments of a Bayard and a Byron, of a Lancelot and a Lamartine.

It is undeniable that *The Rhyme of Joyous Garde* represents the summit of Gordon's poetic achievement. And the reason is that it brings together in complete harmony the two spirits which alternately strove for mastery in the life of the man. The movements in *The Rhyme of Joyous Garde* are varied, but they fit into each other, and grow out of each other, as do the movements in a Beethoven symphony. First of all there is the atmosphere of pure idealism, of pure romance. There is the breath of the south wind, rich with the glory of the hawthorn and the frankincense. It is the man of action, who is also a poet, that is speaking. The setting is that of Arthurian England. Every line of the opening verse is flooded with the sentiment of a romantic country—a country in which brave men lived, and in which great deeds were done.

Against this rich, warm-tinted background is outlined a battle picture. Here begins the second movement. First the country itself, with its sunny fields and blossoming hedges ;

then the memory springing to life of great daring and heroic achievement :—

Pardie ! I nearly had won that crown  
Which endureth more than a knight's renown,  
When the pagan giant had got me down,  
Sore spent in the deadly grapple.

In a couple of resonant verses he explains why. The third movement begins when the woman enters. It is romance again, but romance of a more intense, more personal, more richly emotional kind. It forms the dominant note of this varied theme :—

The brown thrush sang through the briar and bower,  
All flushed or frosted with forest flower,  
In the warm sun's wanton glances ;  
And I grew deaf to the song-bird—blind  
To blossom that sweetened the sweet spring wind,  
I saw her only—a girl reclined  
In her girlhood's indolent trances.

The realism of the picture is carried no further. With fine artistic sensibility Gordon recognises that he has said enough. The woman has entered ; the man has grown blind to the blossom and deaf to the song-bird ; the eternal tragedy, which is not altogether a tragedy, has begun.

For the rest, the poem plays upon two

strings. Alternately there are echoes from the fields of undying renown, and again voices of sad and hopeless and unending regret. The well-known lines beginning :—

Then a steel-shod rush, and a glittering ring,  
And a crash of the spear staves splintering

are a memorable piece of versification. They arrest and perpetuate the fighting Arthurian spirit, they convey in words the actual clash of arms, and they bring back the forgotten mood of the man of personal valour as possibly no other verses have yet done. Such a word picture might be expected to leave weak and tame anything that followed ; but with equal conviction, and with equal command of tone and touch, Gordon strikes again the chord of intense spiritual shame and sorrow, gradually merging it into one of religious appeal and exhortation. On this latter note the poem closes.

The man who had done this great thing surely deserved something in this existence, or in some other existence, in return for what he had given to the people among whom he lived. Surely, one likes to think, there must



be, somewhere, at some time or another, a compensation, a recompense, for the tragedy of a life that merited so much success and vanished, or *seemed* to vanish, in such utter dark.

## VII

### THEATRES AND AMUSEMENTS

Then to the well-trod stage anon,  
If Jonson's learned sock be on,  
Or sweetest Shakespeare, fancy's child,  
Warble his native wood-notes wild.

AUSTRALIANS are fond of the drama, but have no drama of their own. Even those people who talk occasionally of an Australian literature have nothing to say on the subject of an Australian stage. Not only the master-pieces, but the hack-pieces are borrowed; the star actors and actresses are borrowed also. In nothing is the population more imitative than in what pertains to theatres and theatre-going. It is only the buildings that can be described as the country's own, and even here the great borrowing habit is illustrated by the names that are blazoned on the outside of them. "His Majesty's," and "Her Majesty's," and "The Princess," and "The Royal" repeat themselves with monotonous iteration. The

appearance of the majority of these theatres is fine and large, in the literal acceptance of the words. There are not many things that impress the visitor more than the size and the configuration and artistic finish of the places of amusement in Australia.

So far as the audiences are concerned, they are in a transition stage—the stage of development between being delighted with everything and being satisfied with nothing. It is still comparatively easy to attract a crowd to a performance that can boast of novel features, or of moderately good credentials from abroad. In fact, the Australian is willing, at the outset, to take a great deal on trust, even though he is quick to resent what looks like an imposition on his good nature. An indifferent company may have one successful tour of the continent, but it will scarcely have a second. It is the failure to recognise this fact that causes stranded actors to be plentiful as blackberries. The local theatre-goer is good-natured up to a certain point; beyond that point, it is impossible to move him.

Speaking generally, the country is not kind to its own theatrical children. The actor,

like the prophet, has to look for his honours abroad. His fellow-countrymen find a difficulty in recognising him, or at least in approving him, until he has broken in upon them from over-seas. The stage in Australia is looked at, not through opera-glasses, but through a telescope; the thing near at hand is not clarified, but distorted. The man of purely local experience is in no danger of being spoilt by adulation. However tolerated or even admired he may have been, he is expected to seek the shades of a graceful retirement the moment that Brown, of Jones's English theatre, is announced. There is not an Australian-born actor or actress who could not testify to this fact; many of them resent it, but others have come to accept it as a matter of course.

It is true, that there are among the four million people who inhabit Australia, a certain number possessed of discernment. In the exercise of this faculty they now and again perceive that an individual playing a comparatively small part is endowed with special ability. Then, if they are sufficiently interested, they may take steps to secure his acquaintance;

or disdaining this formality, they may button-hole him, remark that they have been impressed by his performances, and invite him to discuss the situation over a glass of wine. An invitation of this kind is seldom refused. The supporters of local talent remark to the Thespian that he is being wasted in Australia; that there is no scope for him in Australia; that he really ought to remove himself from Australia at the first opportunity. It is then discovered that this is the advice his friends and relatives have been tendering him for months past. If he declines to go, or suggests that his own country is quite good enough for him, he is set down as a man of no ambition, and probably of very little soul. More often than not, he is persuaded to go. The favourable opinion entertained of him is found, by a curious chance, to coincide with his opinion of himself. He goes. Perhaps he will be given a few small parts in London and return to Australia a hero. Possibly he will be swallowed out of sight in the world's vortex, and that will be the end of him. More probably, he will return disgusted and disillusioned, not with his own abilities, but with

the blasts of indifference and the *chevaux-de-frise* of cosmopolitan neglect that have met him abroad.

If the actor of purely local experience finds it hard to make a living, the task is quite beyond the capacity of the local dramatic *author*. One or two men born at the Antipodes have made their mark in England as writers of plays. But that has only been after leaving the country of their birth, and after surviving years of hard work and discouragement. Where is the rising school of Australian dramatists? Where are even the faint beginnings of it? And where are the supporters of such a school? Echo answers to these questions. It is curious that there should be such a blankness of enterprise and of inspiration in this domain. The country is out of its literary swaddling clothes; it can support any number of theatres; it can find minor parts for any number of Australian actors and actresses; but it is incapable—in its present frame of mind, it is totally incapable—of supporting a single Australian dramatist. The idea that it might be asked to do so seems never to have been seriously considered. There have, indeed, been a few performances,

mostly by third-rate, barn-storming companies, of plays dealing with the Kelly Gang. And that excellent comedian and manager, Mr Bland Holt, has given us a few stage pictures representing Sydney and Port Philip harbours, and a few melodramatic incidents supposed to have taken place in Australia. But if an audience, on being invited to witness high-class comedy or tragedy of the more intellectual sort, were to find itself confronted with Circular Quay and Darlinghurst, or with Collins Street and Toorak, or with the people inhabiting them, it would receive such a shock that it would not recover until it had got outside the theatre door—and possibly not then. It would feel at first amazed, and then insulted. The recognised understanding is, that nothing worth looking at in the theatrical sense, and nothing worthy of presentation to an enlightened public, can by any chance take place unless it takes place in England, or on the continent of Europe, or in America, or in Japan.

For the reasons mentioned, English actors usually do well in this part of the world. The old country imposes now and then on the inexperience of the new one. It has a habit



of sending here, not merely its second and third best, but its dead-beats and its derelicts. The celebrated English actor of the play-bills is, as often as not, celebrated only in the lively imagination of the *entrepreneur* who brings him out. He comes, however, with a certain flourish of trumpets and glamour of romance. The very fact that he hails from a distance of 12,000 miles is an aureole round his head. He can be sure of a good reception, of an interested, expectant audience. If he has any colourable qualities, they will be loudly, even rapturously, applauded. If he is very indifferent, or if he is unspeakably bad, he will scarcely be told so—at least not at first. The worst he will receive from the critics of the great “dailies” will be a kind of faint questioning, a troubled note of uncertainty, a dim reminder of some one else who played the part differently. They may damn him with faint praise; but they will be loth, at the outset, to do more. The fact that the actor is understood to have won applause in England goes for a good deal, and the commercial and social instincts of the big papers go for rather more. A few of the week-end

journals may bark out vituperation, but they do not really count. It is well known that they are just as likely to attack the supremely good as the atrociously bad. In the long run, it may be—and perhaps before *very* long—audiences will fall away from the imported actor who is manifestly fourth and fifth rate; for Australian play-goers are not naturally dull. They are, however, under the spell of foreign associations; they are influenced, to a greater or less extent, by newspaper criticism; and they have unquestionably given a number of well-boomed and press-belauded visitors better support than, on their merits and by comparison with the local substitute, they deserved.

So far there has been no American invasion. The plays and the topical allusions in vogue south of the Line are either English in origin, or filter through an English channel. Productions hailing from the United States have made their appearance and have fretted their hour, but they have not succeeded in leaving a lasting mark. One reason is, that the associations and atmosphere of the land of the dollar are not sufficiently familiar. What

do we know in Australia of the Bowery? What do we know of Fifth Avenue? What do we know, or care, for the Waldorf, or the Astoria? The local colour of Fleet Street, of Westminster, of Petticoat Lane, and of Kensington, is, owing to numerous stage acquaintanceships, something with which every audience feels at home. But to talk to the average Melbourne or Sydney man of the streets and hotels and public buildings of Boston and New York and Philadelphia, is to talk to him in a foreign language. In the majority of cases he does not know, and when he does know, he does not care.

Another reason is, that the typical American production lacks depth and height. It catches something of what is flitting on the surface of America; but it forgets that America, though topographically a large place, is only a fraction of the intellectual and artistic world. The country has not yet its Sardou, or its Sudermann, or its Ibsen, nor yet its D'Annunzio, or its Pinero, or even its Henry Arthur Jones. A dramatist spoken of as the American Sardou made his bow in Melbourne a year or two ago, with a tragedy named *Nadjezda*. It

was soon made manifest that he had not come to stay. Neither have such productions as *A Trip to Chinatown* or *The Belle of New York*, or *Leah Kleschna*, been responsible for much genuine success. The Yankee playwright is clever with words and indifferent with ideas. As to emotions, he has heard that they exist.

Yet there is one important, non-English product that has won a great welcome from Australian audiences. This is the American actress. She has not been able to acclimatise the works of her own countrymen; she has usually refrained from attempting to do so. Clothing her individuality in the language of Shakespeare and Sheridan, of Ibsen and Bjornsten, of Sudermann and Maeterlinck, of Sardou and Rostand and the Younger Dumas; heralded always by a tremendous flourish of trumpets, and accompanied usually by an astute stage manager; restraining her national prejudices and reducing her American accent to a few pretty words and phrases, she has been enabled to accomplish a great deal. The lady from the United States brings with her youth as a foremost asset. She knows

that it is difficult to "star" through a continent without this ally. She has it proclaimed—loudly proclaimed—as part of her equipment. Everywhere she plays the Young American Actress. It is the first and the most effective piece in her repertoire. For the rest, she finds it advisable to cultivate a manner, and a certain distinction of style, when off the stage. Sometimes she is effusive, even demonstrative, and inclined to be gracious to interviewers. Sometimes she is magnificently cold and distant, with a coldness that is only comparable to the fierce warmth of the characters in which she revels behind the foot-lights. But always in Australia—whether she is on the stage or off it—she is acting, acting, acting. Stage-struck people send her flowers; infatuated people write her verses. She accepts them all and welcomes them all as tributes to her artistic success. She is brilliantly clever, with a cleverness that is all of the head. She gets a great deal, and she deserves what she gets.

To come back to Australian audiences, it requires very little argument to show there is only one kind of play that really appeals to

them. It is the kind of play that hovers about the confines of a socially fashionable, and morally unorthodox, world. It is edged round with impropriety; it is coloured, permeated, enlivened with what the immortal author of *Bab Ballads* calls "guilty splendour." In the background are the lilies and languors of virtue, but in the foreground, placed there for the people to smile at and to condemn, are the raptures and roses of vice. The theme, no doubt, has endless variants: sometimes the end is tragic, and sometimes it is amusing; sometimes a majority of the commandments suffer, and sometimes only one. It is advisable that there should be a kind of supposed moral purpose running through the production. It is an advantage to have one or two high-minded characters as foils to the others; and as a concession to custom, or as a salve to the uneasy British conscience, it is always a wise policy to bring the immoral people to grief in the last act. But no one can pretend to deny that it is these latter—these fashionable rakes and brilliantly attired courtesans—who constitute the real attraction of the Australian stage to-day. If any one doubts this, let him



attempt to run a theatrical season without them, and let him put on the boards a drama dealing only with conventional or with virtuous people. His downfall will be swift and convincing and sure.

For psychology, the typical Australian audience cares little. For poetry on the stage, it cares less. For blank verse it has no inclination. For sustained dignity it has no time. With intellectual fireworks it is but indifferently and partially amused.

Comedy that lies hid in delicate shades and *nuances*, comedy that is chiefly a matter of scintillating words and phrases, is not asked for by the multitude. Even the brilliancy of Mr Bernard Shaw at his best can command but a limited circle of admirers. Even the problem, considered merely as a problem, is devoid of drawing power. When it attracts, it attracts because of its dazzling pictures of luxury and licentiousness.

Tragedy requires to be carefully handled. It is only when it is decked out in certain robes, only when embroidered with certain trappings, only when set to certain music, that it will crowd the benches. The merely



sordid themes have lost their hold, if they ever had one. An immoral play that persists in showing its characters in a garb of sack-cloth and ashes has little chance of gaining an extended hearing.

One play that has had a marvellously successful run in Australia is entitled *Woman and Wine*. The name might just as appropriately have been given to nine out of every ten productions that have held, for any length of time, the local stage. Whether it is *Camille*, or *The Second Mrs Tanqueray*, or *The Gay Lord Quex*, or *Dolores*, or *Zaza*, or *Quo Vadis*, or *Sweet Nell of Old Drury*, or *The Country Mouse*, or *The Marriage of Kitty*, or *The White Heather*, or any other melodrama of the unfailing Bland Holt and Anderson pattern, the title might, with equal appropriateness, have been that of the popular piece of work already mentioned. A theatre-going public—any theatre-going public—is reached less easily through its intellect than through its senses. What wonder, therefore, that a management should find it advisable to stage *Woman and Wine*?

Caring only for one kind of play, Australian

audiences are quite willing, in their restless desire for novelty, to coquet with others. That last expression of national boredom and ineptitude, musical comedy, has its following at the Antipodes. This form of amusement, like the others, is borrowed. It is doubtful whether Australian audiences would ever have taken to it, had they not been assured that it was regarded in England as the correct thing. Now that it has obtained a footing, it is found to have a certain attractiveness. It has become almost a rage. The reason is to be found in the circumstance that it relieves the onlooker from the necessity of having to think. This is a consideration that cannot well be over-estimated. For the rest, it boasts a number of shapely-looking chorus girls, and a funny man, whose business it is to be as mirthfully suggestive, and as suggestively mirthful as possible. There is also some music, but this scarcely counts. The comedy that is dubbed musical is not seriously vicious, but then it has nothing to do with virtue. The latter circumstance, combined with its gaudy colours, its short skirts, and its chorus girls, helps it joyously on its way.

The claim is occasionally made, that one part of the continent is more favourable to high dramatic art than another. Melbourne, which is always endeavouring to be superior to every other city in Australia, is accustomed to delude itself with the idea that it is fond of intellectual plays. It makes a decent pretence, now and again, of attending a revival of Shakespeare. If the brief season proves a failure, as it usually does, the critics unkindly tell the performers that it is they, and not the Bard of Avon, or the taste of the Melbourne public, that are at fault. Sydney, to do it justice, is given over to no such unnecessary make-believe. Shakespeare has been expurgated so much that there is no risk, and consequently no excitement, in going to see him, and Sydney stays away.

Outside the drama there are amusements which, between them, take up most of the thought and most of the spare time of the people. But little requires to be said of them, because, while they resemble the drama in that they are borrowed from abroad, they give much less scope for the play of individual taste and temper and sensibility. Racing is

the national recreation, just as gambling is the national vice. The two insensibly melt into each other. It is a great sporting continent. When the word "sport" is used—when a certain individual is called a sportsman, and another individual is referred to as a follower of "the game"—the reference is invariably to the game in which the horse and the bookmaker play the leading parts. No writer, however admirable his intentions, and however lurid his language, has been able to exaggerate the hold which racing has over the whole population from Port Darwin to Cape Otway, and from Brisbane round to Perth. The office boy reads his racing intelligence in the papers with as much zest, and usually with as much critical discernment, as does the man of wealth and leisure. The man who never goes to horse races and never talks horse, is to be met with, but he is distinctly uncommon. He stands apart from the rest of the community. He is a modern Isaac Newton, given to voyaging through strange social seas alone.

The assertion that racing is a noble and improving pastime—improving to the breed

of horses and incidentally to the people who look on—is continually being made by writers who should know something of the subject. A few delusions of the respectable sort are considered necessary in the life of a people, and the decent efforts of sporting authorities to keep these delusions alive are not treated with disrespect. But any one who wishes to discover the real facts can easily do so. The public who support racing care as much for improving the breed of horses, as they do for civilising the Solomon Islanders, or for christianising the Chinese—as much and no more. The horse is emphatically not the thing; he is not the end; he can hardly be called the means to the end; he is merely a useful pawn in the great and insidious gambling game. In this game there are certain rules which have to be observed. That is to say, they must not be broken in too open, or too defiant, or too glaring a manner. But under cover of these rules, and under pretext of observing them, every one does his best to swindle every one else. The owner begins by deceiving the public; the trainer, if it is sufficiently worth his while,

misleads the owner; the jockey scores repeatedly off the trainer; the bookmaker does his best to make a profit out of the other three. The people who pay in the last resort are the public. It is all very interesting, and very *expensive*. The atmosphere of speculation is buoyant and breezy, and, for the time being, exhilarating. Yet for all except those who have learned how to move about in it—for all except the owners, and, trainers, and jockeys, and bookmakers, and a few others—it is decidedly unhealthy. While it is possibly advisable to have national amusements, it is an advantage to understand what we are doing. The man in Mrs Thurston's novel, who keeps talking about "nerves," when he means opium, becomes, after a time, an infliction. And the individual who is always referring to "sport," when he means horse-racing, is in danger of growing tedious.

The continent has its athletic games, although none of these can be called national in the sense that racing is national. Not even cricket. The Englishman sees more of Australian cricketers than he does of



Australian horses, and may be inclined to think that a country which has beaten him at Lords, while it has been unable to raise a decent gallop at Epsom, must perforce pay more attention to cricket than it does to horse-racing. The idea, if it exists, is amusingly erroneous. How do the attendances at Club cricket compare with the attendances at local race meetings? How does the sprinkling of enthusiasts at the one fixture look beside the tens of thousands, who, week in and week out, follow the racing game in every centre of population in the Commonwealth? An international cricket match will always draw a crowd; but international cricket matches are few and far between. The truth is that the speculation fever, the gambling fever, the fever to which the horse acts as the main irritant, runs in the blood of the people. The other excitements are transitory, and merely endemic.

In the realm of sport, to use the generic word, there is nothing that the people will not attempt, nothing on which they have not turned a roving eye. They play football, golf, tennis, croquet, hockey, lacrosse, bridge,



ping-pong, and a great deal else. They indulge in skating on artificial ice, and, in the middle of a tropic summer, struggle with dumplings and roast beef. They seek amusement everywhere. In the mass, they are far more impressed by skill at some kind of game than by any intellectual achievements. The hero-worship goes out, in the first place, to the successful cricketer, and in the next place, to the leading jockey, with the politician an indifferent third, and the local poet or *litterateur* entirely out of the running. It is an undeniable fact that his countrymen were more proud of that amiable and pleasant youth, Mr Victor Trumper, after his English season of 1902, than they have ever been of any Prime Minister, actor, author, singer, poet, or professor of metaphysics in the land.

In the world of sport and of recreation, just as in the world of the stage, there is the tendency to borrow, and to borrow again. The games that are played in England are played here, just as the kind of drama that is acted in England is acted here. It matters little whether the climate and temperament and other conditions are suitable, or the reverse.

The initiative faculty is stronger than its surroundings. To watch a game of Rugby football in progress at Charters Towers, or at Brisbane, is to wonder whether a new race of Salamanders, gifted with tireless energy and some marvellous kind of asbestos physique, has struck the earth. There is only one thing that may in the end kill the initiative faculty, and that is the national dislike for too much exertion. There are not wanting faint indications that Australia is beginning to find the strain of these more strenuous pastimes too severe, that it is slowly but surely coming to the conclusion that training for football and for sculling matches necessitates more sustained effort than the result is worth. It may be all very well for the Englishman to keep himself warm by vigorous exercise. His climate requires heroic treatment. The Australian, though still ready to abase himself before the successful athlete, is slowly working round to the conviction that certain pursuits are better adapted for the Northern Hemisphere than for his own. The day is coming, and may not be far distant, when the Australian people will revolt from their Christmas dumplings, and

abandon their Rugby football; when they will be content, from North to South, with backing unreliable steeds on a race-course, with playing poker in a shady room, and with watching from the stalls of a theatre, the swaying forms of lightly clad heroines, and the graceful movements of dancing feet.

## VIII

### THE ETERNAL FEMININE

“ But still I see the tenor of man’s woe  
Holds on the same, from woman to begin.”  
“ From man’s effeminate slackness it begins,  
(Said the Angel) who should better hold his place.”

If a writer were always able to put down on canvas his earlier and more enthusiastic impressions, he might draw a pretty picture of the Australian woman. She should be the crown and glory of every Southern landscape; she should have the dawn in her eyes, and the sun upon her hair. In a street along which the heat waves were dancing with a joyous and unrestrained fervour; in a ball-room which echoed and re-echoed to rhythms of music; on a lawn that was decked with hundreds of sun-shades and fringed with myriads of garden flowers; by the shade of trees, on the brink of rivers, in the starlight of conservatories, on the slopes of undulating plains, whenever and wherever the scene wanted a touch of life to add to its romantic interest, she would be the subtle something imparting to the new and

matter-of-fact continent a tinge of the colour of dreams. She should be all this and more, if one could put the clock back to the days before the fiery sword of experience laid bare the garden of imagination; if one could, by dint of any mental, metaphysical, or chemical process, gather up and refurnish the snows of a year ago.

On a subject of this kind it is easy to adopt one or other of two contrasted veins: either the idealistic vein of that thin-spun romanticist, Mr Richard le Gallienne, or the critical vein of that earnest searcher after paradox, Mr Crosland. Is the Australian girl to be idealised? She would hardly thank you. Is she to be satirised? She would thank you less. Is the truth to be told about her? She would meet you with Pilate's question, and ask you to say where it is to be found. Of all tasks, that of idealising is the least profitable, and in some respects, the most dangerous. You are liable to suffer in your own estimation and in hers, by finding at some later stage that you have idealised the Australian woman for the qualities of which she possesses least, and for which she has no kind of sympathy. She

prides herself on her modernity, and on her knowledge of the world. She boasts—and it is her most frequent boast, though it is quite unjustified—that she is not sentimental. She declares that she wishes only to know the truth; and the truth, despite what Mr le Gallienne and Mr Crosland may write to the contrary, it should be the business of every conscientious chronicler to tell.

It is necessary to say something about the position of women in the social and public life of Australia. It is a position in many respects enviable. In this country, be it understood, we have shaken ourselves free of sex prejudices. It is undeniable that there are a certain number of rich but respectable people who would fain rescue the public life of the continent from the threatening danger of a feminine invasion. These individuals for the most part occupy seats in a Legislative Council, and own warehouses in Flinders Lane, and run wool stores along Circular Quay: but they do not represent public opinion. There are only enough of them to fill one or two Houses of Parliament. Being in a hopeless minority, they may be left, for

purposes of the present discussion, on one side.

The public sense of the community is represented by the man about town, and this man, in theory, at any rate, is free of sex prejudices. He is much more free of them than is the average Englishman or the typical European—if there is such a type—or the male biped of the yellow, or brown, or any coloured variety. He is on a level with the progressive American; even, so far as the question of the franchise is concerned, ahead of him. He does not deny the fairness of admitting women to the learned professions. He is seldom willing to stand up and assert, with the blatant unwisdom that is the heritage of past centuries, that they are mentally or otherwise unfitted to exercise a vote at elections. Liberty, equality, freedom for both sexes, are ideals that he can understand. In theory he is an emancipator, a reformer. Such prejudices as he possesses do not take the shape of definite views and opinions; they are the unconscious relics of custom working down through the ages. Theoretically he believes in woman's advancement; but practically he



has no desire to see his bride-elect, or any one of his feminine relations, declaiming politics from a platform, or laying down the law to judges, or teaching logic to a school of metaphysicians. He is in no danger of becoming infatuated with the women who do these things; but neither would he be any party to an arbitrary edict forbidding that they should be done.

It goes without saying that the feminine type most sought after in this country, or in other countries, is the picturesquely foolish type. As it happens, the Australian woman is by no means foolish; on the contrary, she is unusually clever. Nothing comes amiss to her; there is no part that she could not play if called upon to do so. With the unusual gift of perception that is part of her mental equipment, she understands always what *rôle* is calculated to make her most attractive in the eyes of the world. She knows that the average man, despite his occasional glimmerings of reason and of intelligence, is rendered *uneasy* by too much cleverness in a woman, just as a mediocre piano player is alarmed by the display of virtuosity in a rival. For various

reasons, the average woman finds it still to her interest to placate the average man. She sets to work accordingly. In the great game of make-believe she has no equals. She is full of quaint and illogical surprises. For dissimulation she has the prettiest art imaginable. She will always plume herself—more especially in those moments of confidence that are shared with you and the stars—on the precise qualities that are not hers. If she happens to be a brilliant University student, she will talk mainly of her performances with a sewing-machine. If she is a high-class musician, and has no literary faculty whatever, she will talk, not of her interpretations of Brahms and Chopin, but of some journalistic composition that a mendacious editor thought fit to praise. If she is ignorant of the difference between a flat-iron and a rolling-pin, she will tell you of an imaginary confection of hers that excited the raptures of a fictitious gathering of *gourmands*. If she is intensely practical she will play very dexterously for your amusement on a sentimental string. The artistic sense in her is not dulled by a prosaic adherence to facts. She is anything but what she seems.

It is something more than a coincidence that both the churches and the theatres in Australia should be mainly supported by women. Both institutions go beyond the region of commonplace realities; both appeal to the finer sense—the sense of something that is not prosaic. It is melancholy to think what might happen to ecclesiastical institutions in Australia if women did not go to church. It is interesting to reflect that there are more stage-struck girls in the community than in any other of the same size on earth. Those who cannot act behind the footlights, act at home and in the houses of their neighbours. They carry into the walks of everyday life the histrionic faculty, without which grace is a thing unknown, and unadorned human nature is painfully crude and severe. The man is seldom an adept in these matters. As a rule he has no skill at concealing his deficiencies. He flounders badly amid uncongenial surroundings. The Australian girl, on the other hand, will adapt herself with great readiness to any set of circumstances, will look happy when she is feeling exasperated, will smile cordially on

women she detests, will listen with charming and intelligent sympathy to monologues on subjects for which she cares not at all, will be intensely Bohemian or rigidly conservative just as she thinks is required.

There are certain types that have latterly been attracting attention, and one of these is the political woman. With her natural talent for experimenting the Australian woman has paid some attention to politics, and she has found the pastime moderately interesting, so long as nothing more intrinsically important has been to hand.

There are two recognised kinds of political women on the continent. One of these, and by far the more numerous, is the dilettante, the feminine dabbler. She has a pretty, graceful way of deprecating too much knowledge of her subject. She rarely comes into prominence except at election times. She is convinced that Smith is a better man for the country than Jones, but she is far from pretending to know what Smith's views are on the fiscal question, whether he is a single taxer, a preferential trader, or a person of secret anarchical tendencies. If you ask her why

she supports Smith she will probably tell you that she dislikes Jones. She is an expert and resourceful canvasser; like the *pallida mors* of the Roman poet she knocks impartially at the huts of the poor and the mansions of the rich. She goes to the poll if a conveyance is handy, or if it is not too far to walk, and she wins, or helps to win, many elections.

Unlike her is the other type of political woman—the intensely serious, aggressive type. This type is not numerous, but what there is of it is formidable. It is the very latest thing in Australian public life. It is determined to regenerate the world by the *deus ex machina* of the ballot box. It has a mania for contesting seats in Parliament. Its opinion of the opposite sex is quite unfit for publication—nevertheless it is often published. The type of this description is unusual and rather abnormal, yet there are not wanting indications that it is growing in numbers.

Another kind of woman often met with has made a special cult of æstheticism. With the sex in Australia, æstheticism and theosophy usually go together. The writer has been unable to discover what difference, if any,

exists between the two, or where the one begins and the other leaves off. It is surprising to think what a number of girls, particularly during recent years, have taken to professing themselves theosophists. The Anglican curate and the young non-Conformist preacher have but a modified social success in Australia. They are not the toys and darlings of any but a very limited sisterhood. On the other hand, the man who can talk mysticism, and quote Plato or Edwin Arnold, can be sure of a wide and growing feminine *clientèle*. If, in addition, he can play the violin, he leaps at once into a blaze of popularity. It is an interesting phrase of the feminine temperament, this leaning towards a spiritualistic-cum - theosophic - cum - Buddhist-cum - æsthetic School. The underlying principle, the subtle essence pervading the whole, is a yearning for the higher life. This yearning is not actually expressed in common words "understanded" by the vulgar, but is implied in certain lines borrowed from *The Light of Asia*, in certain names taken from the Sacred Books of the Vedas, in a certain transcendentalism of appearance, a certain intensity of manner, a certain



trick of the voice, now and then in a certain severe simplicity in arranging the hair.

At the opposite pole from the æsthetic, is the athletic woman. This latter type is very often to be met with. Considering the languorous and enervating climate that she has, for the most part, to contend against, her performances are more than creditable. She sweeps a wide gamut of athletic achievement. Golf is one of her specialties, but it does not operate to the exclusion of other things. She plays tennis with a tremendous amount of energy, more particularly when it is a question of a ladies' four, and the masculine onlooker or player is absent. In the curious and indefinite pastime known as "mixed doubles," she is a perpetual source of astonishment, alternating between sudden fits of energy and a graceful quiescence in the middle of the court. Her partner is never quite sure whether she is secretly wild with rage at him for taking her shots, or whether she is disgusted with his laziness in leaving so much to her. The athletic woman will also row vigorously, walk untiringly, play hockey till she is red in the face, and dance the strongest male partner off



his feet. In the ordinary course of things she is independent of companionship, and has no use whatever for a chaperone. The least attractive feature about her is her language. In this respect she can out-Herod Herod, and out-slang the slangiest barracker at the most exciting football match that was ever played on the Australian field. Even Professor Morris has no clue to certain of the terms which she evolves either from the recesses of her memory, or from the depths of her inner consciousness. It is stated that she can, on occasion, skip lightly across the border of colloquialism into the stormy regions of profanity. That may be so. In any case, there is not a great deal to choose between the lady who sometimes borrows an Australia curse word, and her whose ready-money is the aforesaid awful vernacular.

Yet another type is the scholastic woman. The lingering mediævalism of Oxford and Cambridge would be surprised if it knew to what an extent in Australia masculine prerogative in the matter of higher education has broken down. We teach our girls everything from classics to metaphysics, from the

theory of music to the practice of medicine, from botany to jurisprudence, from dressmaking to trigonometry, from cookery to architecture, from domestic economy to Egyptology, from plain sewing to conic sections. There is nothing in which they are not being perpetually instructed; and for the result you have only to look around. The erudite woman is everywhere. Sometimes she teaches in a High School or College; sometimes she is to be encountered at home, just returned from a finishing tour to Europe, half shuddering at the prospect of contact with numerous illiterate and unfinished persons, half inclined to envy her sister the loaves and fishes of common domestic life. This scholarly woman—not the one who possesses merely a smattering of scholarship, but the one who has used her cleverness in a sustained attempt to acquire knowledge—the one who has taken degrees and passed examinations by the dozen—is usually unattractive to the eye. She is inclined to be pale, inclined to be angular, inclined to wear spectacles. She has learned too much to have any illusions. She has worked too hard to have much feminine fancy remain-

ing. It is impossible for her to make a hero of a man, because through a long course of scientific and experimental observations she has become perfectly well acquainted with his thousand weaknesses, vices, physical failings, and mental limitations. The man knows that he stands before her like an open book. Knowing this, he trembles, as he has every reason to do.

As a matter of fact no one of these four types, nor all four together, nor any others that might be given a place in the category, represents, in any general sense, the Australian woman. There is reason for believing that most, if not all the phases of activity just mentioned, together with others that might be mentioned, are sublimely insincere, are magnificently built up on shams. The political woman does not really care for politics. The æsthetic woman is only interested in the picturesque side of æsthetics. The athletic girl considers fame at golf or lawn tennis as at best a means to an end. The lady graduate is not in love with her degree. The woman has not yet been identified who can lay her hand on her heart, and swear that the study

of higher mathematics, or even a profound analysis of the Latin poets, is an altogether satisfying pursuit. The age is one of experimentalism, so far as the Australian woman is concerned. She is attempting many things; she is looking for new interests in many directions; she has taken to playing several fresh parts; she has learned quite a number of new tricks. Yet there is a suspicion that they are only tricks after all.

The Australian girl—with the accent on the definite article—remains yet to be defined. Some of her attributes, or accomplishments, or phases are readily enough made out, but many of these are merely incidental modes of the moment; others are to be regarded as streaks of colour on an always variegated landscape; they are not the landscape itself. We know well enough that certain things will invariably take her fancy. A love of dress, a fondness for jewellery, a passion for display, a taste for theatres, a tendency to gush, a dislike for solitude, a mania for admiration—all these are manifestations that are continually meeting the eye of the casual observer. But they are not peculiar to the Australian woman,

or to the sex in any one country. And, on the other hand, there are discernment, subtlety, artistic sensibility, grace of movement, warmth of temperament, quickness of sympathy, and much else that could be mentioned. These latter qualities, for all that is known to the contrary, may be in the majority of cases more outward than inward. That is to say, they may be dexterously woven into the garment for purposes of effect. In any case, it does not matter. If the resulting product can please the eye and satisfy the sense it is foolish to begin raising doubts about its precise texture or its wearing capabilities.

Womanhood, *per se*, apart from incidental gifts and graces, apart from what it can do, and cannot do, seems to be a curious mixture of practicality and sentiment; in other words, of water and fire. The elements are so blended that nature cannot stand up and say with confidence, This is a woman. There is nothing a woman dislikes so much as being called sentimental; but there is nothing she takes to so kindly as sentiment. It is her essence, her *metier*, a part of the air she breathes; she repudiates it in words, but acknowledges it

in practice every day. And yet, with all this extraordinary sentiment, with all this drift towards emotionalism, the Australian girl combines in some mysterious and inexplicable fashion a singular faculty for holding her own, and a marvellously clear eye for the main chance. In the vagaries of her wildest mood there is a concealed art and a sound method. In the whirlwind of her emotionalism there is a certain immovable common-sense. The storm may blow hither and thither, but it blows on sufferance. The cold Angel of reason, with the ruling rod of prudence, is never out of sight and hearing. To understand the position it is only necessary to recollect that the Australian girl, albeit disinclined by temperament to hard routine and cold formality, has been instructed from infancy in many things that were quite unknown to her English sister, at any rate until recent years. She has been taught to rely much upon herself; she is not chaperoned and she is not shut in. Thus it is that, while she is artistically susceptible to every mode of emotion, she will not, except when she is under the age of seventeen, throw herself



recklessly away on the first individual who is to be encountered strolling in the garden of Romance; not even though he be a pleasant person and goodly to look upon.

For the reasons just stated or implied, a love affair with an Australian woman is usually an interesting, and often an instructive, experience. In suggesting for his bored and *blasé* King of Ruritania (or some such place) a love affair with a red-haired woman, Mr Henry Harland was following slavishly in the tracts of physiology. But that kind of science is always unsatisfactory, and, more often than not, misleading. The woman of this continent—Mr Harland had never been in Australia—does not require red hair to prove an antidote for dulness. Her inborn strain of sentiment makes her the finest of natural players in the game of hearts. Her marked individuality and abundance of common-sense render her anything but an easy bird to capture. As a matter of fact, she is more often the pursuer than the pursued. If she sustains a reverse in one direction she recovers it in another. She does not stand to be shot at; she has a thousand subterfuges, a thousand weapons



both of defence and attack. It is only experienced players who can encounter her with safety. The crude beginner is almost certain to sustain damage, if, indeed, he is not battered out of recognisable shape.

It is the histrionic faculty again. The more one observes it, the more admirable and the more dangerous it appears. A clever woman talking to an eligible man in a drawing-room—or anywhere else for that matter—is undoubtedly the noblest work of art. Observe how her own individuality and her own ideas are kept in the background, while she seems to be waiting with prettily veiled impatience for the words of wisdom that she knows are about to fall from the man she is talking to. Observe how the electric light has a habit of falling on her profile every now and then. Observe how on occasion it lights up her eyes. Observe also with what artless art she will bend forward her rapt soul in her eyes, and again lean musingly or languorously back. She gives the man every opportunity. If he has anything to say she flatters him by wanting to listen, by drinking it thirstily in. If it becomes evident that he can't talk, or wont

talk, she will talk for him, rally him, entertain him, be brilliant for him, make him imagine that *he* is brilliant in listening to her. Glancing across the room, we wonder why she does it. We don't know her motive, but we recognise that the man isn't worthy. We see that she is wasting her time, throwing herself away. She should be talking to us. We should be talking to her.

"Nature," said a well-known painter to me only the other week, "is hateful, horrible; it is only art that can make her endurable." He was speaking in the Melbourne Gallery, and he pointed to a picture of his—a "Symphony," it was called—which he had given away for a couple of hundred pounds. The finished work was a symphony no doubt; but the copied thing was to any but the artistic eye a dull conglomeration of twig and leaf and timber. We have to thank this painter for creating out of common and unattractive material a feast of colour that must appeal to every beholder. We are not always as grateful as is necessary to the individual who makes himself look other—and incidentally better—than he really is. The world is full of intensely natural and

intensely uninteresting people. The unrefined product of nature when presented in its native shape is alarming and calculated to make the beholder flee into the wilderness. To be natural is to be condemned. Let us thank the Australian girl for the fine example, for the clear lead she has given. Let us endeavour to be as artificial, as histrionic as we can.

## IX

### TWO CITIES

Where, O Earth ! is a fairer city  
Than this by night, when the Quay's half circle . . .  
Lights the dusk of the city's face ?

MISS MACK'S verses to Sydney are the kind of tribute one would wish to pay to a lover of happier days. For that reason they may awake some kind of echo in the breasts of many hundreds of persons who will confess to a fondness for Sydney, but who are indifferent to the ways and methods of the lofty rhyme. For the place has a strong personality. One never thinks of it as merely so many houses and so many people. An entity, a living thing, a friend, a mistress, a consoler, a woman with soft breath and warm-tinted hair, a queen of men and yet their servant—it is any or all of these, and much besides.

The new-comer should arrange to enter

Sydney by night. If he does this he will experience the strong and always remembered sensation of emerging from Cimmerian darkness into the blaze of a lighted arena. The waters of the Tasman sea are usually cold and stormy. If you have been ploughing across them for the best part of a week, if you have been beset with bad weather, or sea-sickness, or boredom, or with the three combined, you will hail as one of the pleasant sounds of a lifetime the news that there is visible a glimmer from South Head. Thereafter the transformation is rapid. Sydney by night does not *grow* upon you; it *bursts* upon you, and the impression is not soon forgotten. Whatever you have read and whatever you have dreamed of Eastern cities by the Tigris; whatever you have seen of lime-light effects on a brilliant, gaily coloured, thronged and animated stage; whatever you have pictured to yourself of islands and gardens and palaces by the water's edge—all these and more are around you and in front of you as the ship winds past promontory after promontory, island after island, on its passage towards a mooring place in Darling Harbour. The panorama

has an unreal and fairy-like splendour. For a minute or two, perhaps for half an hour, you expect that everything will presently dissolve, and the conditions of blackness and vacancy reassert themselves. But the boat passes on, and the picture remains. You realise after a while that it is the city itself welcoming you, beckoning to you, smiling at you with all its arcs and crescents and its glittering phantasmagoria of lights.

In the daytime all this is changed. Sydney by day is the real Sydney, the working Sydney, and like every other place in which men work and congregate, it has its dull and drab and depressing features. But the strangely marked personal characteristics are there still. They have taken on new phases, and they make a different kind of appeal. Your mistress has no longer the sparkle in her eyes and the diamonds on her brow ; she no longer scintillates to dazzle you, and no longer challenges you to admiration by her life and movement. She has grown languorous as the land of the lotos-flower, enervating as the Island of Circë. True, she has her marts and her merchandise, her busy streets, her ships, and her people who toil

and spin. But they are a people on whom she has set her imprint, and who have drunk the wine of love and of laughter at her hands. The fact is that neither by day nor by night, neither in summer nor winter, can Sydney look consistently hard or repellant. Now and then a bracing wind blows up from the waste places of the Pacific and talks menacingly of storm and stress and shipwreck. But it loses itself or dies to nothing when in the heart of the city, or when endeavouring to make its way along such good - tempered, well - protected thoroughfares as George and Pitt Streets. Sometimes it rains, sometimes it blusters a little, but only with an amusing semblance of anger. In an hour or two the sun is shining again.

A city that has grown has always an advantage, in point of attractiveness, over one that has been merely made. It is easy to understand the reason. No one cares for the display of qualities that seem to be the result of artificial training. Every one admires spontaneity, or rather the appearance of spontaneity. The thing itself may be a product of the finest art. But that matters



nothing. As it is with individuals, so it is with a city. The straight, uncompromising lines which appeal to the draughtsman are of interest to no one else. It is a mistake to cultivate a prim demeanour or to attempt to keep a straight face if Nature has in view something else. The friend who keeps calling "Duty, duty, duty" in your ear is not really wise, and is always certain to be disliked. Equally tedious is the architect, or the surveyor, or the mathematician, who says dogmatically that certain streets should always meet at such and such an angle; that there should be certain spaces for parks and certain widths reserved for traffic; that there should be buildings modelled on particular lines, and conglomerations of houses arranged after a particular fashion; that there should be a scientific method observed in building the thing to be called a city, just as there are particular rules for turning out a baker's oven or for making a carpenter's box.

Sydney, as it does not take long to discover, has grown up after a careless and wilful fashion of its own. It is neither consciously straight, nor consciously irregular. Of modern improve-

ments it takes what it pleases, and leaves what it does not want. Buildings cluster round the harbour and bedeck themselves with red-tiled roofs and flaunt their pleasant inertia in the sun. Some of the more recent structures—hotels, warehouses, public markets and the like—are showy and even magnificent. But the main streets make no pretence to symmetry or modernity, and are strongly reminiscent in their narrowness and grime of second and third-rate towns in France and England. The resemblance would be more striking did not Australia lack the pointed, old-world architecture that gives historic quaintness and interest even to the dirtier and more tumble-down villages of Europe. Sydney is suspicious of new inventions, and would prefer that the disturbing, scientific spirit of the age left it alone. Until lately it knew of no better means of locomotion than its steam trams. It is only within the last year or two that it has had its electric cars. The energy with which these gigantic structures rush to and fro and disturb traffic is quite out of keeping with the atmosphere of the place. There are numerous

accidents, because so many of the Sydneyites have not the energy to get out of the way.

The people, as a rule, are not ambitious. They have not the restless unquiet temperament associated with the Anglo-Saxon race in other and less pleasant parts of the globe. For that reason they are often excellent companions. They know how to enjoy life, and they are willing to share their knowledge with the stranger. They have no cast-iron formulas, either of etiquette or of morals. They have not yet succeeded in reducing orthodoxy to a fine art. It matters comparatively little to them, before or after they have made your acquaintance, whether your education was finished at Oxford or in Lower George Street, whether your father was a pawnbroker or an admiral, whether your nearest relations keep a grocer's shop, or are something connected with the Established Church. Are you an agreeable person? Have you a pleasant humour? Do you know how to make life entertaining? Can you help others to pass the time? If the answer to any of these questions is in the affirmative, the gates of many desirable places will be thrown

open to you. You will be allowed to tread the primrose path to the music of lutes, to the sound of soft voices, to the rustle of silk and satin embroideries, to the rhythm of Government House waltzes, to the popping of Vice-regal champagne. The possession of wealth is an advantage, but it is not indispensable. The Sydney creditor is as accommodating as most creditors. Even this class is not absolutely proof against the influence of climate and surroundings.

Among the men who do the mental work of Sydney—the writers, the scholars, the financiers, the preachers, the politicians, the social reformers, and the rest—you find this lack of ambition and of sustained effort particularly noticeable. A degree of ability is common enough. But it is not husbanded and utilised with that fierce concentration of purpose which marks the North of England man when he packs his bag for London, or the Western American when he sets out for New York. The journalism of Sydney is intermittently clever, sometimes brilliant, never consistently good. It may be that a man has a vein of humour, a descriptive faculty, a

sense of colour in words. It is little use telling this man that if he works and waits, and waits and works—if he denies himself the cheap laurels of newspaper favour, and the thin rewards of journalistic achievement—he may ultimately win a place in the inner circle of approved and recognised authorship. He knows that he can get a guinea for a couple of hours' application. What is the advantage, then, of going elsewhere? A guinea is a guinea; and Sydney is an excellent place in which to spend it. Thus he reasons in act, if not in words. The consequence is that the intellectual tone of the city, as set by the writers and thinkers, is for the most part a blend of opportunism and of *laissez faire*. If you want to learn something, if you want an incentive to act, if you want to live the strenuous life, you must leave Sydney and go somewhere else.

The women of Sydney are in a class by themselves. They are as distinctive in their way as the city in which they live is distinctive in its way. There is little doubt that in a measure they obtain their character from the place, though it is also true that they assist

to give the place its character. To think of them, after the lapse of years, is to conjure up pleasant memories. There is reason to believe that the Cytherea of the ancient Greeks was born in Sydney, or at least lived there in prehistoric days, long before settlement crowded the approaches to the harbour, long before Governor Philip sighted the Heads, long before the country knew anything of modern habitations, and while it still slumbered in the embraces of the Golden Age. The waters still smile when they remember the vision that once rose from them; and to this day they impart something of the warmth and colour of the foam-born Aphroditë to the women who dwell by their fringing shores. Not that the daughters of Sydney are classical, or Grecian, or faultless in form and feature. The symmetry of the marble statue is no part of their equipment. They are deficient, for the most part, in correct outlines. Such charm as is theirs is mainly the result of manner, of temperament, of suggestion, of look. They convey the impression that their sympathies would not soon be alienated, that their welcome would never be ungenerous,



that they could, if they wished, make of existence a pleasant thing.

The character of the people has been a subject for uneasy speculation. It is darkly hinted that the city is a refuge ground for many strange sins. The majority of the residents do not trouble about these matters. But there are a few estimable people who do. The women belonging to the W.C.T.U., and the I.O.G.T., and the I.O.R., and the rest of the alphabet devoted to temperance and the higher life, work consistently hard. In their display of zeal they almost make up what they lack in numbers. They are troubled voices calling in a moral wilderness, but they do not despair. They have one friend and confidant—the Colonial Secretary for the time being. The tales of depravity that are poured into the ears of this patient individual each month would fill many volumes. His official life is a round of dreadful discoveries. He begins his Ministerial career a cheerful optimist, and ends it with every vestige of illusion gone. Virtuous and estimable women belonging to every reforming agency in the metropolis are constantly at his elbow, are constantly telling him



of fresh detachments of young children found in opium dens, of fresh batches of drunkards picked up in the gutter, of new contingents of women discovered on the street. The Colonial Secretary is asked, entreated, and commanded to do something. Exactly what it is his auditors do not know, but *something*, he is told, must be done. The unhappy man listens, shudders, sympathises, and protests that he is passionately grateful to the earnest women who have thought fit to lighten his mental darkness. He agrees that something must be done, and knows in his heart of hearts that nothing can be done. Meantime the social life of Sydney goes on, and the place, with its agreeable men and graceful women, is a place to be desired and pleasant to the eyes.

It is always pleasant—pleasant to linger in, pleasant to look forward to, pleasant to look back upon. Not very intellectual, not very strenuous, not very inspiring, it has all the aids to enjoyment that have been discovered in the last twenty centuries, and all the ingenious devices that have ever been invented to make time pass. A city that has from its birth been cradled in soft airs ; a city

that spreads against the storm and stress of dissatisfied ambition, the protection of mild and lulling wings; a city intended by Nature to please the artist and bring the practical man relief and rest; a city that rescues humanity from the stern and unlovely asceticism of a gray and narrow school; a city that is indifferent to morals, and cares for religion only on the picturesque side; a city that holds always with the Persian poet and tells its people to enjoy themselves, for to-morrow they may be with yesterday's seven thousand years.

To leave Sydney and to go to Melbourne is to enter a new world. Instead of resemblances there are contrasts. In place of Australianisms there are Anglicanisms, Americanisms, and foreign "isms" of various kinds. Climate may have something to do with the difference, and topographical conditions may have something more. The reception that Sydney gives you is that of a woman in a luxurious room, with soft lights falling on rich curtain hangings, with glitter of glass and silver ornament, with lavish display of elegance and outward charm. The woman rises seductively, looks at you languorously and invites you, not so much by

word as by gesture, to make yourself at home. It is delightful; but yet there is something wanting. The reflection comes that you are not being specially favoured; that this is the manner of the hostess to all and sundry; that there may be something unhealthy in this mellifluous atmosphere; that the smile of welcome is less that of the friend than that of the courtesan. The reception you get from Melbourne is of quite another character. The woman this time is cold and calm, and superbly indifferent. If she seems to smile it is probably the reflection of your own hopefulness. She offers you nothing; she barely acknowledges you; she does not want you; it is certain that she is not anxious to know you. All her panoply of architectural ornament is arrayed against you. And yet the thought supervenes that this cold woman may be better worth knowing in the end than the other one; that her harder outlines may conceal a more genuine worth; that her good opinion may be better worth striving for than that of the other—the one with the redder lips, and the flaunting, unchanging smile.

But the wide streets and the flat unoccupied

spaces of Melbourne are an outward semblance calculated to strike the newcomer with a shuddering sense of chill and desolation. More especially if they are encountered for the first time on a winter's afternoon. For the winter that merely dallies and trifles in Sydney, and makes but a pretence of bringing with it cold weather, is genuine in the Southern city. There is no bleaker thoroughfare on earth than Collins Street or Burke Street on a blustering July day. From Spring Street to the railway station there is a clear, unbroken passage for the Arctic wind. The occasional tramcar and the infrequent pedestrian are cheerless objects around which the Sou'-Wester disports itself, seeking always, in return for some ancient grievance, a grim and unnecessary revenge. If the day happens to be a Saturday, or a public holiday, the outlook is rendered ten times more dismal by the deathly appearance of the streets, from which all but an unreal semblance of life and movement has departed. A wilderness of grim-looking window shutters, and a Sahara of pavement—that is all. The wind drives the dust in front of it, then follows on shriekingly.

When it has finished playing with the dust it brings in the rain. And Melbourne, with its wide, shelterless streets swept from end to end by a rain-storm—Melbourne with its blank spaces and its vanished crowds—is the one place on earth where the new arrival would choose *not* to be.

But this appearance and mannerism of the Queen city—it clings to the name, though the boom era which gave the name a meaning has departed—must be lived through, and lived down. Presently the sun will shine again. Presently the holiday will be over; and the people who have been abroad in the suburbs, or cultivating their garden patches, or hiding themselves in their own houses, will be once more visible, and the pavement will once more echo to the sound of feet. By a seeming miracle the streets have become almost full. Melbourne has become an intelligible place to live in. The shops, now that the window shutters are down, are seen to be beautifully fitted up. The buildings are for the most part new, and they are never grimy. One remembers that in the heart of Sydney there are pervading evidences of smoke and grime.

One must give Melbourne its due. It has something to boast about. It has been magnificently laid out. Its measurements are on a generous scale. It is fine and large and bracing. One forgets the chill sensation left by those deserted streets and those grim-looking window shutters. The Block has become a centre of bustle and animation. Again the thought presents itself that this place may have a heart of its own, that it may have a personality, even a warmth, concealed behind those set features and those formal lines.

Further acquaintance with Melbourne increases the respect felt for it. One gets to like it for the same reason that the Londoner gets to like London. It is not a question of beauty, or simplicity, or gentleness of form and feature. One gets to like it because of its greatness, and because of its strength; perhaps also, in the case of the older residents, because of the thought of the splendid life and animation that were part of it fifteen or twenty years ago, and that may be part of it again. The Melbourne man, after a certain lapse of time, acquires a personal feeling for his self-contained, self-respecting



city. He learns to recognise its various moods—for even Melbourne has moods—and to enter into them all. He would not care for it if it were flashy and volatile like other places. He can admire it for its reserve and its silences. He knows that, go where he will, he will not find a cleaner, wider, more spacious city to dwell in. And he is fully aware that for him Melbourne reveals much of what she keeps hidden from the stranger; that she will show to him as to one of her lovers a warmth and friendliness that are the more satisfying because not universally shared.

Commercially, Melbourne is not what it used to be. It has lost the sparkle, the animation of other days. Yet, whatever else it has lost, it has retained its consciousness of former prosperity. It is as proud as ever; in fact more proud than in the days when people were pouring into it by thousands, and when fortunes were being made every five minutes in its principal streets. Diminished prosperity has caused it to hold its head higher. And at stated times, like some proud but impecunious beauty, it insists on recalling itself to the mind of the world. On Cup



Days and *fête* days it scores a triumph: it arrays itself in the festal garment of the early 'nineties, and queens it to the admiration of the stranger within its gates. On these occasions Melbourne is incomparable. It has no need to be envious, because it is the admired of all admirers. When the cheering is over, and the crowds have departed, and the lights are being put out, Melbourne retires moodily into itself, goes about its daily business with an abstracted air, and consoles itself intermittently by talking of the long deferred prosperity which it insists must come.

For if the place fails in this or in that respect, it never fails to keep its expectations high. It has been doing this for the past dozen years or more. It has long outgrown its happy-go-lucky, red-shirted, soft-collared, mining, pioneering days. It has no wish to recall these outward symbols of an earlier and a vanished generation. With the memory of many losses and many disappointments, there is still the determination to put the best face on everything. Though the crowds no longer hum and vibrate round its chief thoroughfares,

it retains its streets and its houses, its spacious theatres and commodious public buildings ; its magnificent Houses of Parliament, its squares and gardens, its network of railways and tram lines, its villa residences at St Kilda and its mansions at Toorak. The outward shell of things is still there. Every now and then there is a sign of movement, an agitation as of returning life. The people are convinced that something is going to happen. The period of depression, they say, cannot last for ever. In imagination they can see the Golden Days ever returning.

Meantime, the business of keeping up appearances goes on. Melbourne has become accustomed, through sheer force of insistence on its individual merits, to regard itself as everything that a modern city ought to be, and as most things that other cities are not. It prides itself on a great deal—on its music, its art, its culture, its architecture, its good looks, and its intelligence. In the matter of dress it aspires to set the fashion for Australia. Men and women join in this amiable rivalry. The girl of the Victorian capital is more severe in demeanour, more classic in pose,

and more punctilious in attire than her Sydney sister. She takes herself more seriously. She has few *negligé* airs and graces; she does not cultivate the irresponsible freedom of the gown of Nora Creina; she arrays herself for the Block with a firm resolve to compel critical admiration. And in this she generally succeeds. The men of Melbourne live in starched shirts and expensive broadcloth. They cling tenaciously to that fading relic of an earlier civilisation—the bell-topper hat. Social life in the city would be impossible without one. The Universities keep up their quota of students, whether the parents can afford to pay or not. The theatres can attract audiences even for a performance of Wagner, or a revival of Shakespeare. The city fathers set an example of dignity to the rest of Australia. The politicians rarely call each other bad names, and never indulge in free fights on the floor of Parliament.

Behind all this outward seeming there is, it need hardly be said, a great amount of make-believe. Melbourne is only the temporary capital of the Commonwealth, but it is the

permanent centre of—to use an ecclesiastically sounding word—attitudinarianism. Its mental life is more the expression of a desire to be thought superior to others than the outcome of any set of inborn predilections. Its intellectuality has the motto *videri quam esse*. There is not one of its learned pundits or its *litterateurs* or its native born poets who has won much outside reputation. Its scrupulous regard for dress is the screen for much actual poverty. Its vaunted cosmopolitanism has no real existence. Its social circle is, only too often, the playground of snobs. Its professed public virtue deceives no one. In Sydney the spectacle of vice undraped, and of Lais plying her profession in the public streets, is more insistent and more familiar. But in Melbourne there is as much for the Women's Christian Temperance Union to grieve over, though there may be less that meets the casual eye.

When the last word has been said on the subject—when it has been admitted that Melbourne pretends a great deal and poses a great deal, and hides a great deal—it is yet a fact that the city retains among its

people much of sterling worth, and many of the elements of greatness. From the army of those who are not what they claim to be, or not what they would have you think them to be, may be picked out a leaven of those who are entitled to respect, and perhaps to something more. Alert, quick-witted, well-read, well-mannered, tolerant, and scrupulously fair—that is the type which may be encountered if the search is keen enough. Hereafter, this type may set the standard. At present, all that can be said of it is that it is there.

The fact must always stand to the credit of Melbourne that it is capable of generous enthusiasms. When it lets itself go, it does so without reserve. Carlyle has remarked that a man who can laugh unrestrainedly, even if he only laughs once, is not wholly bad. A city that can cheer unitedly and unreservedly, whether for a singer, an orator, an actor, or a returned contingent, has at least some prospect of emerging from the wilderness of shams in which it happens to be located. Melbourne rises to greatness the moment it forgets itself.

## X

### THE NOVELIST AND HIS SELECTION

Some are born great, some achieve  
greatness, and some have greatness  
thrust upon them.—MALVOLIO in *Twelfth Night*.

HE is a remarkable figure. It has remained for Australia to produce him, and he is peculiar to Australia. He stands now in the full blaze of the limelight. It has been centred on him for the past couple of years or more, but the operator has not thought it necessary to move the screen, and the audience, for its part, is quite satisfied. Business is keeping up splendidly. There are some who say that a prophet, and especially a literary prophet, must be without honour in his own country. True as the statement is in the main, there are occasional exceptions. One of these is furnished by the young man in the shirt sleeves and the riding breeches, the young man with the resolutely modest expression on his features,

the young man who has been photographed and paragraphed throughout the continent. He is a man of much talent. English *Punch* and Sydney *Bulletin* both say so. Sir John Madden declares that a copy of one of his books should be in the hands of every boy and girl in the Commonwealth. That should be enough. Let us, therefore, sing Viva! Let us sing it unitedly, for the winter of our literary darkness is passing, nay, *has* passed away.

Every one is aware by this time that Mr "Rudd" writes about the back-blocks of Australia. He has discovered them. In fact, he has almost invented them. What a region it is! To the casual observer it may lack something in variety of scenery, in charm of association, in human interest. But then the casual observer is not one who need be taken seriously. Still less is he one whose opinion on literary matters is of much value. In this interior region of the great Southern continent there are shingle huts, and wire fences, and occasional gum-trees, and the dry beds of creeks, and the thin crops struggling above the surface of



the ground, and, for the rest, a flat monotony of desolation. For human interest there is an occasional sun-browned, dirt-begrimed settler, an occasional ragged and vacant-faced youth, an occasional dull-eyed, but stout-hearted woman. These people are part of the life of the nation, and it is instructive to read about them. In "Steele Rudd's" pages they have their exits and their entrances, their humorous, tragical, quaint, fantastic, sordid, and pathetic phases. The novelist has done them every justice. So much justice has he done them, that they have come, in a manner of speaking, to obscure the horizon. Three books have been written about them, and the reading public is not yet satisfied. It is still—or was a few months ago—clamouring for more; it will take as much more as the author cares to give.

It is admitted that "Steele Rudd" has done a great thing; but it may still be asked whether it is possible to praise a local writer sanely and temperately, without going into ecstasies about him, without making both himself and ourselves look ridiculous. Is there only one man in Australia whose books are

worth purchasing? Has the city life, the business life, the artistic life, the ambitious life, the intense social and political life of civilised Australia nothing to say for itself? Must we reserve *all* our superlatives, *all* our limelight, and *all* our hard cash for this writer who keeps telling us, with persistent and applauded iteration, about the shingle hut and the awful wire fence, and the frightfully monotonous prospect of ragged selector and sunburnt plain? What of our million and a half city residents? What of the light and the love and the laughter of Collins Street and Circular Quay? Is it not a fact that these have been crowded out, unfairly crowded out, of the canvas? It is no wonder that outsiders call us parochial. It is no wonder that they say we are lacking in perspective. It is no wonder that, when we go to London, they judge us by our odd pieces of *genre*-painting, and tell us that there is no market for that sort of thing in the metropolis—that we had better have stayed at home.

It is astonishing how few people, even of those who have lived in Australia all their lives, have succeeded in discovering Australia.

It gives one almost a shock to reflect upon the amount of misconception that has been spread throughout two hemispheres by Mr A. B. Paterson, Mr Henry Lawson, Mr "Rudd," and one or two others. Incredible as it seems, it is yet a fact that there are several varieties of soil and climate to be met with in this benighted part of the world. A man may take himself out of sight of the sea-coast, he may even settle on the land, and yet have no experiences of drought, of dust-storms, of dry creek beds, or of thermometers at  $120^{\circ}$  in the shade. He may even find that the weird melancholy of his place of abode has to be manufactured out of his own imagination. In one part of the continent, and that a part getting well up towards the Equator, there are the Darling Downs, which are neither monotonously melancholy nor afflicted with recurrent drought. And at the opposite end of the continent, in the south of Western Australia, there are magnificent forests of karri and jarrah, a soil capable of luxuriant growth, a hundred thousand square miles of rain-fed land waiting for the plough. In the western district of Victoria is to be found

the Southern home of English grasses, of European cereals, and of leafy trees. Another land of streams and of fertile country stretches south from Port Jackson to Twofold Bay. Within a couple of hours' train ride of Sydney there is the western mountainous district, than which there is no finer tourist ground in this or in any other continent. When will some one write for us the romance of the jarrah and the karri forest? When shall we hear, as a change from the foreign sentiment of the Tyrolean Alps, the love story of Katoomba and of the Blue Mountains? Is there ever going to be an Australian Hardy to make lifelike fiction out of the Victorian western district? Are these scenes, these places, these happy hunting-grounds of the nature and humanity lover, to be, like the brave men who died before Agamemnon, always unknown because of the want of an inspired bard?

It is true that there is a dry and dusty and drably monotonous side to Australia. This is the side that is most constantly written about. Geographically it is of the greatest importance, because it takes up so much space. So far as its population is concerned, it

amounts to little more than a bagatelle. The people who inhabit it are about as numerous as the ghosts of lost explorers in the Arctic Circle. Everything is against it as a residence for white men—its blare of relentless and scorching summers, its bleak and rainless winters, its dry creek-beds, its brick-like plains, its ungenerous soil, its tremendous distances, its fearful monotony, its unspeakable isolation. Yet it is an extraordinary circumstance that white men go there. They go to live at Burke, and at the back of Burke. Other land is waiting for them, other and more genial parts of the continent are clamouring for settlement. Yet, for some unknown and inexplicable cause, because of some hope that is greater than experience, because of some pioneering instinct that is superior to reason, because of some courage that is stronger than death, men are to be found ready to plunge into this hard wilderness, believing they can tame it and break it in.

The books of the most successful Australian novelist are concerned with the doings of these agricultural pioneers. He has exploited them for all they are worth; a critic might be

inclined to say for more than they are worth, if he had not in mind the extraordinary result of the recent flotations. There has been quite a sensation on the local literary exchange. Mr "Rudd's" debentures, after three successive issues, are as firm as ever. He has monopolised the market. Who else can command a price for this kind of paper—the paper that gives a mortgage over Australian literary securities? The promoter of Dad and Company, Limited, has had on his side the most experienced "bulls" to be met with in Melbourne and Sydney. The "bears" have so far had no voice in the matter. One particularly useful "bull" is he who operates with a pencil. The illustrations of "Our Selection," and of "Our New Selection," and of "Sandy's Selection," are very striking and effective. If there is something that the terse language of the novelist has failed to convey, or if the imagination of the reader is not quite vivid enough to conjure up the whole picture, there is the artist's sketch or portrait to help out the illusion. Another individual, whose value in sending up literary stock can hardly be overestimated, is the journalistic fogleman.



He has been unanimous from end to end of Australia, and his share in the "Steele Rudd" boom must not be allowed to go unrecognised.

It is a game that many play at, this game of novel-writing; and when some one appears with dramatic suddenness, and carries off the one prize worth having, it is necessary, it is inevitable, that we should endeavour to find out how the feat has been accomplished. We know that he has succeeded, but how, and by virtue of what gift, or mannerism, has he succeeded? Is it by sheer virtue of literary merit, style, finish, or that kind of attribute? These are what one would naturally look for in any contest where pen and ink are the chief weapons. But the search in this instance would upset preconceived ideas. "Steele Rudd's" literary garment is pure homespun. There is no embroidery, no tapestry, no rich colouring of any sort. Even the favourite Australian expletives are much watered down. One character says "damn you" to another character, and says it often, but otherwise the vocabulary of profanity is not drawn upon. The Australian novelist might have been tempted to take a leaf out of the book of Rudyard Kipling, but



he has not done so. For this we can thank him. He gives no fresh terms, puts no strain on the meaning of adjectives, and takes no liberties with the English language. He deals very largely with monosyllables. Often he leaves out introductory and connecting words, thus giving his paragraphs a jerky, staccato effect. It is a style that Henry James would marvel at, but one that the man in the street thoroughly understands. The intelligibility constitutes its great merit. Yet, even this latter quality, though it may be rare, is hardly rare enough to carry the possessor to affluence and fame.

In what, then, does the supreme virtue of "Steele Rudd's" novels consist? Is it in the character-drawing? Here again the answer must be in the negative. A thousand readers will rise to their feet as one man, or as one woman, and point to the figure of Dad, the original selector, as a supreme triumph of characterisation. But what has Dad done to render himself original, or in any special way distinctive? As he appears in these pages he is ragged, sun-browned, simple-minded, good-hearted, optimistic, and persevering. It

is a character one likes, a temperament one admires. It is a figure that the Australian public has taken to itself, and one that only a sacrilegious person would speak of in disrespectful terms. We pass by Dad with all deference, only venturing to remark that while we admire his courage and perseverance, we find his optimism somewhat reminiscent of Micawber, and his simple-mindedness faintly suggestive of my Uncle Toby. And we say without any deference, that the subsidiary figures, the Dan's, and Joe's, and Kate's, and Sal's of the "Selection" series, exhibit very little character-drawing worthy of the name.

There must be some other reason for the author's triumph. If the cause is not to be found in a superlative literary quality, or in the subtle analysis of character exhibited by Meredith and others, it may be discoverable in the absolute fidelity to nature of certain scenes and incidents. Have we unearthed in "Steele Rudd" the Australian painter of real life—a man who can emulate in the Southern Hemisphere the example set by Gorky in Russia, or Zola in France, or Gissing in

England? Scarcely this, either. From the pen pictures of these back-blocks novels the element of realism is, for the most part, dexterously eliminated. There may be—there are, pages out of real life. But if the author, or any one else, told the whole truth, or half the truth about the stunted growths and dull intelligences that result from too long and too intimate an acquaintanceship with the Australian desert, the book would not be considered pleasant reading. The people who buy it now would put it on one side with a slight shudder, and a Chief Justice would not refer to it as the kind of volume that should be in every household, and studied by every boy and girl. Mr “Rudd’s” so-called life-like pictures are much idealised. The palace of Claude Melnotte by the Lake of Como was not more preferable to the gardener’s hut, than is the cheerful, breezy existence of Dad and Mother and their *entourage* to the soulless, hopeless life-struggle of a certain kind of Australian family. To be a genuine realist, you must not only give the hard facts, but reflect the atmosphere of your characters and places. The atmosphere of “Steele Rudd”

is nothing if not buoyant ; the writer is always confident, and always smiling, even when he is telling about ruined crops, and suffering adults, and hungry children. If he is not a true romanticist, neither is he an absolute realist. He is as far from being a Zola as he is from being a Beaconsfield.

Yet a triumph is a triumph ; there must be some reason for it ; it cannot be built, or, at least, it cannot be sustained on air. If we put aside the literary quality which is not stipulated for, and the character-drawing which scarcely exists, and the realism which is mainly imaginary, we are driven back on the humour—that impregnable Torres Vedras behind which every devotee of the “Selection” novel sooner or later entrenches himself. It must be the humour. The word is one that has a very wide meaning. A man might more profitably endeavour to number the stars than to bring the elusive quality of humour within the four quarters of a satisfactory definition. For practical purposes it may be observed that a humorous thing is that which strikes you as humorous—though how, and when, and why it should strike you, are matters

that rest entirely with yourself. The most learned pundits have laid it down as an axiom that there is great humour in the spectacle of the fool in *Lear* reminding his mad and weather-beaten master of the sorry spectacle he is making of himself. "Steele Rudd," beyond all question, is a humorist, and not the less one because his comic episodes take place in an atmosphere that is compounded much more of tragedy than of mirth. The incidents themselves—say, for example, those of the parson and the scone, of the racecourse and the worn-out brumby, of Dan and the snake-bite, of Dad and the hoe—are scarcely calculated to make a sympathetic reader laugh. But running through the episodes as a whole, and colouring the work as a whole, there is a certain suggestion of humour which it is difficult to locate or analyse; a certain lightness of touch which can hardly be explained in words; a certain buoyancy of treatment that makes reading easy; a certain creative quality that is rarest of all, and hardest of all to define.

The humour and the local colour would appear, therefore, to have carried the day.

An author has arisen in this country who can make his readers smile, and who can convey to them an impression of certain places and of certain people peculiar to Australia. It does not matter so much why they smile, so long as the smile is visible. In regard to the local colour, it is necessary to remark that this is not quite the same thing as realism, though the two are often associated. Local colour is the mask behind which realism may or may not exist. With the aid of these two qualities, or gifts, or attributes, the young man who writes under the pseudonym of "Steele Rudd" has travelled a long way. Perhaps no one is more surprised at the distance he has compassed than himself. There is evidence in his latest work that he is beginning to collect himself; that he is recovering from the shock of his literary advancement, and is beginning to attempt stronger and less fantastic things. He may do better even than he has done yet. Every one will hope that it may be so; for the writer with a gift like his is not common in this or in any other country.

But there is another phase of his literary enterprise that must be considered. It has



to be borne in mind that the "Selection" novel does not exhaust the methods of communication between Mr "Rudd" and his public. The people who acclaimed the author in book form, are—or were until a few months ago—getting him in magazine edition. The monthly print which has sprung into existence on the strength of its editor's reputation is not only baptized with his pen name, but contains regular instalments of his wit and fancy. Once again the familiar figures rise before us. Once again we are invited to gaze on Dad with the whiskers, and Joe with the patched trousers, and Mother with the arms akimbo and the round face. Once again we breathe the atmosphere, once again we hear the language. Once again we are reminded of the simple economic truth that, so long as there is a demand for any commercial or literary product, a supply will be forthcoming,

It is distinctly a matter for congratulation that there should be original effort, and individual style among the writers of Australia. The continent should be well able to maintain two or three magazines of its own. One has only to think of the talent that is running



to waste. In a majority of the Sydney and Melbourne daily papers, brains are allowed to show themselves, and are occasionally encouraged. If any one takes the trouble to read, critically and carefully, six successive issues of one of these big "dailies," he will find much that is calculated to surprise him. If he is not surprised, it is only because he has been long accustomed to the menu. A great deal of skill in the use of sentences, some vivid delineations of men and places, much artistic discernment, undoubted eye for effect, literary or dramatic criticism of a bright and illuminative character—all these, and more, can be found now and then in the columns of the metropolitan press. Talent is going to waste for the reason that the authors are usually unrecognised, the work is underpaid, the public take all for granted, and the writers, when their brilliancy begins to wane, are expected to remove themselves and their fading fortunes to another arena. There *should be* Australian magazines strong enough and popular enough to win for the man—the really able man—who grinds out his soul on a morning or evening paper at least an Australian recognition. There should be,

but there are not. The reason, if sought for, is to be found in the deep-rooted, the seemingly ineradicable habit of obtaining magazines, along with the latest book, the latest melodrama, the most up-to-date hat, and the newest thing in waistcoats, from London or Paris, and from nowhere else.

"Steele Rudd's" magazine can claim the great merit, the unusual distinction, of standing on its own feet. Whatever else it does, or does not do, it gets its materials from within the continent. When it deals in new ideas—a somewhat rare occurrence for a monthly magazine—the ideas can be set down as its own. It finds no trouble in filling up space. The old friends are there, but they dance to slightly different tunes. Here and there a costume has been altered, here and there is a fresh streak of colour, here and there is a new dab of paint. There is nothing *décolleté* about any of the literary figures, or about those supplied by writers in this magazine. All are decent and proper on the moral side. The one stipulation is that they must be Australian. How they grin and twist and tumble, these subsidiary performers whom the

"Selection" novel has called into existence! Here is the contributor who is to speak a piece about art and the Bohemian quarter—save the mark!—of Sydney and Melbourne. Here is our amusing friend of the red page. Here is our local story writer, with his rather tragical humour, and his rather humorous tragedy. Here is our minor poet, tuning his lyre and tearing his hair. And here is the editor himself, smiling genially, conscious of his triumph, but modest, inflexibly modest, the while. They are all writers for "Steele Rudd's" magazine. The trail of "Steele Rudd" is over them all.

What is to be thought of this latest development? Is there scope for it in Australia? Will it be permanent? Or is the author giving us a little more than we originally bargained for? Does he recollect the parallel case of Tithonus:—

I asked thee : Give me immortality ;  
And thou didst grant mine asking with a smile,  
Like a rich man who cares not how he gives.

The analogy is obvious. We, the suppliant public, are Tithonus ; Mr "Rudd," the person supplicated, is Aurora. We asked him to give us more of his "Selection" literature, and

he, the rich man mentally, granted our request—granted it with a smile. But, again like Tithonus, we scarcely realised what we were asking for, or how much we were likely to get. For Mr “Rudd” *himself* we have always a welcome, and always some pieces of silver. But for a whole school of “Rudds”—a recurring atmosphere of “Rudds”—a monthly and ever present edition of Joe and Sandy and the rest—we were not entirely prepared. The significant circumstance is that writers in Mr “Rudd’s” magazine are beginning to imitate Mr “Rudd.” When a young lady contributor is found beginning a sketch of a place out back with monosyllabic question and monosyllabic answer—when “Mick” and “Sam” and “the girls” are once more brought forward—it is to be apprehended that the influence of the master is at work, and that others are attempting a task which can be *safely* entrusted only to one.

The story of the “Selection novel” as popularised in this country teaches a useful, if rather obvious, moral. In any world, literate or illiterate, there is nothing succeeds like success. There is no fixed law or principle about these

matters. There is no critic whose opinion is worth anything when weighed against the opinion of any other critic. "What am I, the dreamer, but a dream?" writes Victor Daley, *à propos* of the riddle of existence. How can we, the lookers on at the game, know what the verdict of the public will be, or whether thumbs will be turned up or down? One man has a fondness for the poetry of Shelley, and another prefers the prose of Mr Lorimer; one man has a passion for *Lohengrin*, another would rather have three hours of *The Country Girl*. And if the majority prefer it, if it gives them more genuine pleasure, *The Country Girl* is the better work of the two, whatever some opinionated critic may say to the contrary. It is useless to argue about opinions. There is only one recognised criterion, and that is success. There is only one way of measuring success, and that is by the monetary standard. When cast into the scales, the third, and in some respects the weakest of "Steele Rudd's" books, weighs out at £500. And this for an Australian literary man is the most conspicuous success yet achieved.

## XI

### THREE WRITERS OF VERSE

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?  
Think not of them, thou hast thy music, too.

Yes, we have our own music: and it is not all thin in quality, nor is it all played upon a single string. A rare value, a special distinction attach to the achievements in verse of Victor Daley, who is one of the latest to join the great company of poets in the shades. He did his work for a people who were somewhat indifferent and who, when they appreciated, showed their appreciation in no very practical way. And now, when he is

Far too far for words or wings to follow,  
Far too far off for thought or any prayer,

these fitfully poetical, but wholly good-



hearted people of the continent in which he lived are inclined to regret him. It is a regret that does them credit, though it can be tempered with some reflections of a more satisfying kind. For Daley was honoured probably as much as—perhaps more than—most poets are by their contemporaries. It is possible to believe that in the long twilight which preceded his earthly eclipse, he believed that he had given lasting shape and form to some of the more beautiful, more intangible things of life, and found sufficient consolation in the belief. There is not a great deal to be said about the life history of Victor Daley. Some one of those who rhymed with him, drank with him, joked with him, or sat up all night quoting verses with him may yet write his biography. But it will not be a startling or an eventful document. He was of Irish parentage and came to Australia—unless a statement made by one of his most intimate friends is erroneous—when nearly out of his teens. He drifted into journalism, as many men of restless temperament and uncommercial principles do. He wrote a great deal both in prose and verse for Melbourne

papers, for Sydney papers, and for up-country papers in New South Wales. He married early, and children grew up round him. When he died in Sydney towards the end of December 1905, he was but forty-seven years of age. The lingering illness that preceded his death left him in straightened circumstances; so straightened, in fact, that his friends thought less, at the finish, of his chances of immortality than of the prospects of keeping a roof over his and his children's heads.

His most important publication was the volume *At Dawn and Dusk*, which appeared about eight years before his death. It consisted for the most part of occasional pieces, reprinted from various papers. It brought the author a certain amount of intelligent and appreciative criticism, and a slight—but only a slight—monetary reward. Thereafter he went on his way; the fitful and uncertain way of one whom circumstances had forced into journalism, but whom temperament had made a poet. The book mentioned is his permanent record.

There are certain moods that are not easily

expressed in the forms of common speech ; that are not easily expressed at all. There are occasions when the average man wishes—it may be only for an instant or two, but he wishes—that he had some better medium of thought transference than the ordinary prose of ordinary use. For those few moments he could desire that the gods had made him poetical, even if for the remainder of his life he would prefer that they made him anything else. Then, it may be, there comes beating across his brain the recollection of a similar mood interpreted adequately and finely by another. He is grateful for the chance of appropriating and taking to himself that which he did not individually create.

One of these less prosaic, less frequent moods is that of sentimental regret. Every one knows it, every one has been through it. When looked back upon, it is an experience to be valued. It is always a relief from the harder outlines of the present. It need have no bitterness and scarcely a tinge of remorse. This mood, or the indulgence in it, is the tribute the man of sensitive mind pays to his better nature, to the woman he might

have loved, to the ideal he might have attained. It is a mood that the million recognise, but that only the one in a million—that is to say, the genuine poet—should be allowed to express. Another mood, and a more impersonal one, is that which implies discontent with the present surroundings, and longing for more distant fields, for ampler opportunities, for less prosaic realities. The discontent may be merely petulant or it may have in it something of the nature of the Divine. All depends on the temperament of the individual. Yet another mood, and a still more pronounced and easily recognised one, is that of erotic or of semi-sensual desire. In its cruder and more direct form it is the mood that finds voice in the Shakespearian poem of *Venus and Adonis*; in its etherealised essence it is the mood of Shelley in the poem addressed to Emilia Viviani.

The first of these moods—the half-regretful, half-sentimental and wholly idealistic one—is finely interpreted by Daley in the verses entitled *Years Ago*. He voices a passion that is no longer a passion, but rather a figure of remembrance, from which the poetic

temperament can draw Memnon music. The woman of these verses is not described, but suggested. There is no need to describe her. The reader must build her up out of his own experiences. She must always be looked at from a distance, and must always live in the mind of the man for whom the intenser passion of desire has become the soft glow of remembrance. Daley shows her silhouetted against the sky-line at the moment when his ship, the inevitable ship of Destiny, goes sailing :

Across the seas in the years agoe ;  
And seaward set were the eyes unquailing,  
And landward looking the faces wan.

The poem is a very fine one. It is musical, rhythmical, dreamily sensuous, and never crudely realistic. The workmanship is even, and the high level reached in the first verse is maintained to the end. The words and the treatment create their own sentiment, and always suggest more than they say.

There is another mood in which Daley has been equally successful—the mood of picturesque romance. This is the frame of mind in which he sails “into the sunset’s

glow." Here, also, he strikes a note that awakens a universal echo. Every man has wanted, at some time or another, to sail into the sunset, understanding by that word the whole untrodden, unattainable, indefinable, but brilliantly lighted and always glowing region that lies beyond the boundaries of the place in which he follows out the round of his allotted tasks. It is only on the wings of imagination that one ever arrives within sight of this region. And the wings themselves must be of a certain texture, or they will melt more quickly than did those of Icarus. There are only one or two people who can supply materials calculated to take the voyager there. Victor Daley is one of these. He has himself explained the necessary equipment:—

Our ship shall be of sandal built,  
 Like ships in old-world tales,  
 Carven with cunning art, and gilt,  
 And winged with scented sails

Of silver silk, whereon the red  
 Great gladioli burn;  
 A rainbow flag at her masthead,  
 A rose flag at her stern . . .

And perching on the point above,  
Wherefrom the pennon blows,  
The figure of a flying dove,  
And in her beak a rose.

It is an auspicious, even a brilliant commencement. Dull and ungrateful must be the mind or temperament that refuses to acknowledge either the skill of the builder, or the perfection of the craft.

A third phase of Daley's is one common to all poets, whether good, bad, or indifferent. Its impression is conveyed in what, for want of a more exact term, is called love poetry. It is not composed either of sentimental regrets or of sunset fantasies. It deals with the present and associates itself with one object — a living one. A certain class of writer conveys in this form of poetry a direct appeal to the senses. Daley rarely does so. He is always imaginative rather than realistic. He can play on more than one emotional string; but it is never so much the woman herself as the memory and the thought of her that he appears to caress. In the verses entitled *At the Opera*, which recall Browning's *A Pretty Woman*, he puts



his poetic creed into a sentence. Others may pluck the rose and watch it fall and die; "but I—

Love it so well, I leave it free."

And even in *Blanchelys*, warmly tinted as it is, he suggests in the opening four lines an atmosphere that is far more idealistic than it is intense or burning:—

With little hands all filled with bloom,  
The rose tree wakes from her long trance,  
And from my heart, as from a tomb,  
Steals forth the ghost of dead romance.

It stands to the author's credit that his touch never vulgarises. He never drags his objective to a lower level; when his theme is woman he raises her to his own level, or to the one that he has created for her.

Victor Daley has written on a variety of subjects, and some of his work is in a lightly humorous and descriptive vein. His signal merit as an Australian writer is that he is not wedded to the soil. He is not dependent on the gum tree or the wattle, or the dusty plain. His best work is cosmopolitan in character and tone. It is difficult to see how the fore-

most place among local writers of imaginative literature can be denied to the man whose name is appended to the collection of verses *At Dawn and Dusk*. A strictly conscientious critic might find it incumbent upon him to add that while Daley has done some things well, he has done other things not so well. He might begin with a major premise to the effect that the poet was conspicuous for some gifts, and add as a minor premise, that he was not so conspicuous for others; and the syllogism might be completed by a pronouncement to the effect that when the indifferent work had been weighed against the good work, the latter much preponderated. Sometimes it seems as though there were a clog on Victor Daley in his flight towards the empyrean. He wants something of the lyric quality, not merely of a Shelley or a Swinburne, but of such a musical rhymester as Will Ogilvie. The man who wrote *Blanchelys* is in the same family as Cassius; he thinks too much. The idea is sometimes better than its setting. Imagination, atmosphere, creative power, selection, beauty of thought, beauty of phrase—he has all these. But that

resistless melody which flows like water, and chimes like a bell, is only attained by him now and then. It is only occasionally that harmony of thought and expression are complete. There is no doubt that Daley lacks much of the rousing, resonant quality that always appeals so strangely to unpoetical people; that is to say, to the majority of people in most countries under the sun. Thus a few still pass him in the race for recognition; there was scarce one in his lifetime that did not pass him in the pursuit of tangible reward.

Yet it should not matter a great deal to Victor Daley, living or dead. He was never a great popular success. He never aspired to be a great social success. His personal gifts and graces were reserved for the comparatively few. The average individual, who deals in groceries, or who has laid hands on mining shares, could have bought and sold him many times, even in his most prosperous days. There are a large number of prosperous tradesmen in the country who could, metaphorically, have driven over him—who would certainly have done so literally, unless he had

scrambled out of the way. He dealt in brains, in sentiment, in imagination, in the beauty of life and the romance of life. He was not outwardly successful, because that kind of success belongs principally to the coarse-grained men, to the rough-fibred men, to the unimaginative and the uncreative or the essentially lucky man of the world. But it does not greatly matter. He has his audience, and it is a growing one. It is the only kind of audience whose good opinion is really desirable. It will remember him and cherish him in that region of fancy to which all good poets make their way hereafter—a region in which tradesmen cease from troubling and self-made merchants never intrude.

It may be putting a stress on the word to call Henry Lawson a poet; but a writer of many verses, some of them very good ones, he certainly is. He is a prominent figure in Australian literature, or what passes for Australian literature. He covers a great deal of ground; he is always suggestive of one country, and that country Australia; he has a great deal of talent; he is—or was—very

restless and ambitious; he is extremely versatile; and after ten or twelve years' work he finds himself still pursuing editors to their sanctum, and still wondering where the latest manuscript is likely to find a resting-place. *Tantæ molis erat*—to win fame by writing prose or verse in Australia.

And yet Lawson, if he has won nothing else, has won a very considerable measure of local fame. Of the five million people in Australasia, it is only the very uneducated and very unintelligent who are not acquainted at least with his name. He is better known than Victor Daley, only less known than Gordon and Kendall. This, at any rate, is something. The pity of it is that those who know what he has done are aware also of what he has failed to do, or of what the people he wrote for would not let him do; of the manner in which he has drifted or been driven from pillar to post; of his peregrinations throughout this continent, through New Zealand, throughout England, and back again; of his inability to lay up for himself treasure upon earth; of his frequent discouragements following upon his fitful successes; of his

shaken firmness of purpose and of mind. The liking and admiration felt for him are tinged with the sympathy that one feels for a man who has been cheated by destiny of the stakes he fairly played for, and should have fairly won.

Daley's genius is essentially cosmopolitan; Lawson's temper and colouring are always Australian. Therein lies the main difference between them. Lawson attempted at the outset an almost impossible task. He aspired to make both a living and a name for himself as a literary man. It was a noble aspiration, but in the circumstances quixotic. What he needed, what he should have been given, was some professional, or even some mechanical training that would have brought him in an income, while his audience and his reputation were growing. Some one ought to have taught him shorthand, or got him into the Civil Service, or made him a lawyer's clerk, or instructed him in the art of making bricks, or driving cabs—anything to save him from drifting round the continent with unpublished manuscripts in his pocket. Some one should have done this for him; but who? His father he never really knew. His mother, a large-

hearted, large - minded woman, happened to be proud of her son. He grew up without a professional training, but with a rich inheritance of ideas.

He has offered himself to the reading public of Australia ; has, in fact, thrown himself upon it. He has not been rejected ; but he has learned that the path of the literary free-lance is one of the rockiest and most discouraging that ever presented itself to a man cursed with a hatred of routine, and an ability to write. The recognition that he has won has never had an adequate cash value. He acknowledges the fact with much candour and some bitterness. But he has taken the good with the evil. He has never lost heart. He is not unmindful of his author's prestige, and is not lost to its compensations. Yet he writes to his son :—

You are a child of field and flood,  
 But with the gipsy strains,  
 A strong Norwegian sailor's blood  
 Is running through your veins.  
 Be true, and slander never stings ;  
 Be straight, and all may frown—  
 You'll have the strength to grapple things  
 That dragged your father down,



Be generous, and still do good,  
And banish while you live  
The spectre of ingratitude  
That haunts the ones who give.  
But if the crisis comes at length  
That your fate might be marred,  
Strike hard, my son, with all your strength,  
For your own self's sake, strike hard !

Lawson himself has struck often and dexterously, but with a somewhat uncertain aim, a wavering objective. He realises now that success is won only by a striking hard and relentlessly at the one thing in front of you ; by striking also at the heads of all who happen to get in the way.

In estimating the published work of this bard of the bush and the open plain, it is desirable to allow something for the special circumstances that have both made and hampered him. He has had to write for his living ; and he has written too much. His typical and humorous verses were never out of place in the columns of a newspaper, but their careful collection and subsequent reproduction in book form were not necessarily a service to the memory of the author. Lawson would admit quite candidly that they were

written, many of them, to fill up space and to earn a guinea. They were not intended as pure literature; and if regarded in that light may be the cause of an injustice to the author. To get to what is worth preserving it is necessary to rummage about among a mass of what belongs only to the moment.

There is scarcely a type, or a class, or a feature in the life of his continent about which he has not rhymed and written. The station-hand, the rouse-about, the shearer, the bullock-driver, the jackaroo, the up-country selector, the swagman, the drover, the dead-beat—he has made verses and extracted humour out of all of these, and out of many more of the same kind. He has shown great ingenuity, great powers of observation, wide-reaching sympathy, and a great deal of very clever phrasing in this class of work. The result may not be poetry, but it forms in the aggregate a rare and valuable picture of a mode of life and of a people who are still a people apart from the rest of the world. No one has described them quite so faithfully as Lawson has done. Some of these verses, for example those entitled *When the Ladies come to the Shearing Shed*,

will stand reprinting and, for the purposes of the comic reciter, committing to memory.

But Lawson is, or until recently was, genuinely ambitious. He knows what is poetry and what is not. He has fine ideas. He has felt something of the sentiment of life and something of the weird romance and tragedy of life. A starry night in the wilderness, a woman standing by the water's edge, a homestead where there was once a garden, a sunset, a tree, a flight of wild birds—all these have spoken of him, and he has answered back in kind. His handling of romantic and of patriotic themes marks clearly both his achievement and his limitations as a poet. From such pieces as *Reedy River*, *The Old Stone Chimney*, *Faces in the Street*, and others of the kind, we understand what he has felt, and what he would wish to say. Such verses show that he comes near to the goal of true poetry, and even occasionally places his hand upon it. But his final word and his strongest word is that in which he voices the longing of the man who wishes to do more than fate will let him do. The world, he says, is not wide enough. The scope is not great enough.

The chances are not attractive enough. The fetters are becoming more cramping as each generation goes by. But once—once there was a time. Listen to the resonant ring of it, that other time :—

Then a man could fight if his heart were bold, and  
 win, if his faith were true,  
 Were it love or honour or power or gold or all that our  
 hearts pursue,  
 Could live to the world for the family name, or die for  
 the family pride,  
 Could fly from sorrow and sin and shame, in the days  
 when the world was wide.

Henry Lawson should, for his own happiness' sake, have lived in that other and more spacious time.

As the third representative of the school of contemporary verse writers we may take Miss Louise Mack. We may take her for several reasons. In the first place, she is a woman and represents the woman's point of view—the Australian woman's attitude towards art and life. In the second place, it has been claimed for her, by some of those who have followed her work most closely, that her achievement in verse is the most considerable that stands to the record of a woman in

Australia: In the third place, it is a fact incapable of disguise that she has distinctive promise and distinctive merits of her own.

Setting apart for a moment the attainments of Miss Mack as a writer of poems, it is impossible not to appreciate and "affect" the nature and temperament of the woman. She has both strength and delicacy. She has a genuine, inborn habit of tenderness, combined with a certain power of artistic restraint. She is by no means colourless. She is not a mere imitator. She *understands* a great deal even if she does not in her literary work always *realise* a great deal. It is this combination of strength and tenderness, added to an artistic, womanly sensibility, that makes her already a distinctive figure in the world of letters, and gives promise of yet greater achievement and wider appreciation in the future.

What this Australian authoress needed at the outset was a measure of candid, though kindly, criticism, and a certain amount of disappointment. Instead of these she was given an intoxicating draught of praise. To a Daley or a Lawson this recognition, this flattery, might not have proved in any sense

harmful. The man's faculties are harder, more firmly knit. His temperament is less emotional. His judgement is less easily swayed. If he possesses an original vein he will, in nine cases out of ten, let it take its course. But Miss Mack, when scarcely out of her teens, had held to her lips a cup of intoxicating quality—a cup for which hundreds of men and women, of perhaps equal ability wait all their lives and which they never obtain. The people who championed her not only printed her poetry, as they well might do, but printed her prose. This prose, though it did not rise above mediocrity, found its way into book form, and was despatched with much enthusiasm to different parts of this, and of the other hemisphere. The ambitious girl was taken on the staff of one of the Sydney papers. She was grateful and anxious to please. She knew that her predecessors in office had been smart and flippant; she knew that she was expected to be the same. She did her best to fulfil expectations. And though she never quite got down to the level of the tiresomely smart and painfully clever society writer, she at least succeeded in suggesting, through her prose



writings, the atmosphere of the circle amid which she wrote. She could not be vulgar, therefore she was only moderately smart. She avoided being serious, and she realised—what? The pity of it is that when she emerged from this groove, and began to write books of travel and of personal experience she wrote as if still under the impression that it would never do to be herself; that it was necessary to be smart, or to perish in the attempt.

However, it is possible to forgive her for conveying that impression. It is possible to forgive a great deal to a mind like hers, to a talent like hers. Her verses, collected into book form and published under the title of *Dreams in Flower*, form a compendium which is of genuine value, and which possibly justifies its claim to be considered "the most distinguished body of verses" written by a woman in Australia.

It is the peculiar merit of Miss Louise Mack that she almost invariably suggests more than she actually conveys. The intangible thing called inspiration is hers. The ether waves that play upon the surface of her imagination are of the subtlest and rarest kind. Neither



her ideas nor her method are commonplace. Continually she seems to be opening the door to an enchanted region of fancy, to vistas of the loftiest conception, to palaces of purest gold. But the glimpse is a fleeting one. The door is no sooner half opened than it is shut again. Or, if the enquirer is allowed to enter, if he makes any progress beyond the rich and splendid portals, he usually meets with disillusion. He finds that the initial grandeur will not go with him to the end of the journey. He realises that the authoress has given him a promising start, but that if he follows her too expectantly he is likely to get left in the wilderness.

Considering that poetry is mainly impressionism, and that it is not like logic, where a weak link in the chain of reasoning makes the whole fabric worthless, it is necessary to acknowledge a debt of gratitude to this writer for her fine individual passages, for her rich idealism, for her many musical lines. She can play on more than one string. Her lines on Sydney, which stand at the commencement of *Dreams in Flower* have a trick of haunting the memory. The sentiment is warmly human,

but is so far from being commonplace that it deserves to be called pantheistic. The opening invocation would disarm criticism :—

Oh ! to mix in my soul this city,  
That lies with feet in the fairest waters,  
This young, unformed Australian city !  
In the harbour's arms the isles, her daughters,  
Dream all day in a perfect sleep.  
Oh ! to hold in my heart those waters,  
Flowing east with the sun behind them,  
Through great gates to the outer deep !

There are two following verses almost equally good, and it is only in the fourth and last that the inspiration is seen to flag :—

Oh ! to sing of this little city  
A true strong song that no years can weaken :  
A song that tells how the sea-girt city  
Cast her light o'er the seas, a beacon  
Seen and sought by the farthest sail ;  
Made a name that no years could weaken,  
Fought a way to the fore of nations,  
All lands owning her vast avail !

The repetition of "weaken," as applied first to the song and then to the name, is not effective ; there seems to be confusion of ideas between a place that is merely a glimmering beacon and one that has attained to "the fore of nations," while the meaning of the last line

is not clear. The inspiration which carried the writer brilliantly through three verses failed her in the last.

Yet there are individual poems in this collection which betray no serious defects of workmanship. They are short and strong and self-contained. They are the exception to the general rule which makes Miss Mack a poet of exceptional promise but of uneven performance. The lines *On Wairee Hill* are imaginative, and always musical. *Illusion* strikes more than one resonant note. In the verses entitled *Vows* we get the woman's emotional and intellectual strength in revolt against the trammels of conventionalism; and in *As long as any May* there is as much intensity as the brainy Australian woman usually allows herself to feel—or, at any rate, to express.

There is a certain intellectual force, as well as a genuine poetic vein, in the verses of Miss Louise Mack. One imagines her to be always mistress of herself. The lyric mood may interpret her, but it does not master her. We find here no hint of the school which delights in "sense swooning into sound." To

quote from her poems is hardly to do her justice. She is stronger mentally, and finer artistically, than her published work.

There is one short piece entitled—it might be *Silences*—which seems to interpret, as nearly as possible, her independent, woman's view of life. It begins :—

I take my life with my hands,  
You shall not touch, you shall not see ;  
I hold it there away from you,  
The fitful shining soul in me.

Ah, but you do not know 'tis hid,  
Because you did not know 'twas there ;  
You look along the curving lip,  
Search the deep eyes, and touch the hair,

And cry, " Oh love me, woman, love  
Your eyes are stars, your mouth a flower " ;  
And all the while a low voice says,  
" This is a fool without the power

To look beneath and find a free  
Unfettered spirit serving none,  
A heart that loves, and does not love,  
A space untrod by any one."

So let us keep our silences !  
I'll honour yours, or mine will break ;  
And you, guard well the sacredness  
Of mine for your own soul's shrine's sake.

These are only flashes of ideas, but they

will suffice. The Australian woman of the advanced, intellectual type requires careful treatment. You may admire her, but you must not pretend to a complete understanding of her. You may marry her, but you must not expect to absorb her. She will give you confidences, but only when in the mood; she *may* give you kisses, but behind them there is a splendid shining soul that laughs and draws away—

A heart that loves, and does not love,  
A space untrod by any one.

## XII

### FOUR PRIME MINISTERS

What a piece of work is a man ! how noble in reason ! how infinite in faculty ! in form and moving, how express and admirable ! in action, how like an angel ! in apprehension, how like a god !—HAMLET.

IN every important transaction, in every impersonation of life, it is of advantage to be able to look the part. History, when it comes to deal with the first Prime Minister of Australia, will say that he possessed this advantage in a superlative degree. We are all more or less susceptible to appearances. In very many cases we can judge only by appearances. In very rare instances are we given the opportunity of getting behind the outer shell of things and judging personality.

That fortune was generous to the pioneer of the Union movement in Australia, is universally admitted. He not only spoke well, but he looked well. He won votes in country districts before he had uttered a



syllable. Some of his critics said that he travelled the country on his hair. The statement was at best a half truth, and at worst a trifle libellous. For the Goddess, in emptying her horn into the lap of the future Prime Minister, gave him something more than an idealistic head of hair, useful asset though that has been. It gave him a large skull-index, a massive forehead, an impressive set of features that look their best when on a platform surmounting a vast concourse of people. It gave him a certain faculty for looking like a great man. To hear Edmund Barton concluding one of his elaborate and lawyer-like periods, to watch him closing his lips firmly and looking out with that Roscius-like gaze over the heads of the audience, is to experience an unreasonable desire to rise up in the middle of the hall and cheer. The crowd is always amenable to proper discipline, and it has been disciplined by its eyesight into believing that it could do no better than exalt Barton to the highest offices within its gift.

To endeavour to get at the personal and intellectual quality behind this imposing framework is to receive a somewhat vague, a some-

what indeterminate impression. Only the Creator and Edmund Barton himself know what is at the back of those fine eyes when the audience is intensely listening, and certain well-sounding phrases are telling their tale. Only they know, and one is no more likely to tell than is the other. The word histrionic suggests itself in this connection. It is not by any means a bad word; it is by no means intended to be used in a disparaging sense. The first Prime Minister of Australia has a knowledge of effect; he appreciates and loves effect. In that fact lies his strength and his weakness, his greatness and his less than greatness, his virtues and his demerits. There is no part he could not play if it looked well enough, there is no *rôle* of which he could not seem worthy, and there is no height to which he could not histrionically attain. You could fit him with no robes, place him in no position of dignity, load him with no honours to which he would not appear entitled. Whether representing the Commonwealth in London, whether taking precedence of Dukes and Earls at a banquet at Guildhall, whether voicing the aspirations of the new Common-

wealth in the councils of the Empire, whether facing the flashlights of the Mansion House, or looking lofty rebuke on the disorderly ruffians of Woolloomooloo, there would never be any doubt as to his capacity for looking the character. You would say instinctively that the best man had been chosen. Personally he knows in what his strength consists. He has the confidence which comes from the consciousness of great powers ; but he knows also that certain effects are obtained in a certain way.

Putting his rare dramatic faculty on one side, it is impossible to deny the ex-Prime Minister the credit of being unusually gifted, unusually able, unusually subtle-minded. This is the type of intellect from which very little could remain hid, provided that investigation seemed worth while. Edmund Barton, in the course of his half century or more on earth, has investigated quite a number of things. He has read and studied a great deal. His public career has been marked by an erudition rare in any country. But he has owed less to his reading than to the quality of his mind. It combines in a singular degree two contrasted gifts—

that of close analysis with that of fervent enthusiasm, or (what is the same thing for a public man) the appearance of fervent enthusiasm. In the thousands of speeches which Edmund Barton has delivered in this and other continents, you will look in vain for any crudeness of thought, for any narrowness of vision, for any lack of illuminating powers. The daily newspaper men of Australia know well enough how the ex-Prime Minister's utterances used to be inlaid thought on thought, word upon word, qualifying phrase on qualifying phrase. There was an absence of directness, often, but there was never an absence of mentality or of idea. When a man of such impressive gifts and of such histrionic faculty undertakes to play Peter the Hermit; when he says that such and such a thing ought to take place; when he declares, as he did in the Sydney Town Hall on a memorable occasion, that, "God means to give us this Federation"—for all the world as though he had received a direct communication from the Almighty on the subject—the result on the average individual is usually convincing, not to say overwhelming.

The less than complete political success of Edmund Barton must be attributed, not to his intellectual qualities, but to his character. It was his character that, from the day of his great appointment, fought against him. The fact is that he possessed too good a character. A worse man would have held office longer, if not with better results; his conspicuous lack of badness, of hardness, of callousness, was his chief enemy. It is not to be assumed, because this fact was so, that the great advocate of Australian Union set himself to live a life of austerity to which the vaunted virtues of Edward the Confessor or of a modern college of Cardinals would be as riotous excess. He had his redeeming faults, and, unless the Supreme Court Bench has scourged them out of him, has them now. But they were not the faults that tell most in the strenuous business of Party warfare; they were not the faults that help a man to vanquish his deadliest enemies. Sir Edmund Barton was not quite cunning enough, or, rather, he would not stoop low enough; he was not hard enough, he was not unscrupulous enough; there was much of the Macbeth

temper in him ; what he wanted highly, he wanted holily, or, if not holily, at any rate respectably. Whether from inherent principle or because he was averse of certain lines of conduct, or because the *cui bono* precept had struck too deep a root in his philosophy, he would not try ways that were open to him. He compromised, conceded, refined, and yielded more than once. In his place in the House he was always a splendid, an impressive figure ; but the bull-dog tenacious quality that is the possession of many lesser men was never his. When he took a seat on the Supreme Court Bench, it was recognised that Parliament had lost the man best worth looking at within its walls, but it was recognised also that the probabilities of complete success were brighter for him in the new sphere than in the old.

To speak of Alfred Deakin, the second man to hold office as Prime Minister of Australia, is to speak of a unique personality. There is no doubt that Nature, when it conceived the idea of giving an Alfred Deakin to the world, intended him to be much disliked. It specially designed him for that purpose. To begin with, it gave him all those



agreeable and outwardly attractive qualities which make a man suspected by his fellows. As in the case of Byron, all the fairies were bidden to his cradle. They came in smiling enough fashion, but they had a malignant purpose. So it was that the future Prime Minister was loaded with gifts and graces intended to drag him down. He grew up tall and straight and comely to look upon. A quick-minded, receptive, intelligent man of ideas, he was voted a most agreeable person to talk to. No one could quote the romantic poets more aptly, or talk the language of culture with better accent and discretion. When he went upon a platform, words flowed from him in a silver stream; when he stood for Parliament, audiences felt that they were being honoured above their deserts. He was member of the Victorian Legislative Assembly at twenty-three, Minister of the Crown at twenty-seven, Senior Representative of the Imperial Conference in London before he was thirty-one, member of the National Australian Convention four years later, and Prime Minister of the Commonwealth when he was forty-seven. His flatterers have com-



bined with Nature to do their worst : there is nothing on which he has not been complimented, from his management of the affairs of a nation to his smile, or from his oratory to the way in which he holds the hand of a lady at a dance. When he made his first official visit to London the late Queen Victoria enquired, in a sentence that became famous, whether there were many men like Alfred Deakin in the Australian continent. He has been belauded impartially and comprehensively as an Adonis and a Demosthenes, as a Caius Gracchus and a Marcus Aurelius, as a Beau Brummell and a William Pitt. It is no wonder that newspaper men, knowing him only by repute, and seeing him for the first time rise in his place in Parliament, have shuddered inwardly to think what manner of insufferable and awful person such a petted individual must be.

Yet Alfred Deakin, to do him justice, has struggled manfully against his disadvantages. Nature intended him to be disliked, undoubtedly, but it is well-nigh impossible to dislike him. He has fought a great and, on the whole, a successful battle against the load of adulation that has been pressed upon

him. This circumstance must always stand to his credit, while it explains a great deal that would otherwise be incomprehensible. With every inducement to develop into a snob, he has made conscientious efforts not to become one. Any unknown and undistinguished person, aware of the blighting effects of success on the average temperament, would hesitate to approach Alfred Deakin. He would say that such a man could not retain his sense of proportion, could not judge except by appearances. As a matter of fact, the Prime Minister is at his best when talking to little-known people. If you happen to be a newspaper reporter, travelling in the same train with Mr Deakin—and the present writer has often been in that position—you need not bother either to entertain him or to keep out of his way. It is more than likely, unless circumstances keep him otherwise occupied, that he will make it his business to entertain you. There are certain qualities he recognises. He has always time to spare for a man who is intelligent and earnest and anxious to get on. He does not worship success; because he has had too much of it, he knows how to

value it. My own opinion is that Alfred Deakin is intensely tired of all this talk of himself as a "silver-tongued orator." If some one could convince him that he was not really an orator at all, and had only a blundering acquaintance with the fine points of the English language, he would be intensely grateful. I remember an incident, slight but significant, which took place when he was moving, in presence of a full and adoring House, the second reading of his High Court Bill. There was only one individual—a rash and sacrilegious individual—who ventured to interject. The House was astonished; one or two members looked as if they expected the roof to fall. The Speaker's wrath blazed out against the offender, but Mr Deakin took the latter's part. "It was a friendly interjection, sir," was his comment, as he replied to the rash person's remark. The episode may have been trifling, but at least it went to show that Mr Deakin is weary of his very remarkable reputation; that he dislikes being looked upon as either a tin god or a hot-house flower, and that he would welcome anything that brought him to the ordinary level of political war.

It is necessary to get away from the glamour of Alfred Deakin's oratory, and the shining white light of his character, in order to arrive at some reasonable estimate of his value as a politician. On the latter subject a great deal has been written, and a great deal could be written, not *all* of it in the language of extravagant eulogy. It is said that the "tempers" of the man of words and of the man of action are necessarily distinct. That may or may not be the case. What is certain, is that there is no instance on record of a politician combining such a gift of speech as Deakin's with an equal faculty for wise, clear, vigorous, and resolutely determined action. As a State Minister, this darling of the gods was chiefly remarkable for what he wished to do, but failed to do, in connection with Victorian immigration. He had a great poetic conception of what might be achieved in the arid regions of Northern Victoria by letting in healing streams of water, and causing wildernesses to rejoice and blossom as the rose. He constructed channels, built reservoirs, and expended public money; but the channels ran dry, the reservoirs became barren, and the local bodies repudiated the

debt. It was a splendid failure on the Minister's part, but none the less a failure. As an advocate of Federation, Mr Deakin was a complete success. Eloquence was required, and it was forthcoming. As Prime Minister of the Commonwealth, Mr Deakin did little during his first term—as a matter of fact he had time to do very little—but he spoke finely, and went down heroically on a question of abstract principle. If he had vanquished a continent he could not have been more vociferously applauded on the manner of his downfall. He has now another magnificent opportunity, and it remains to be seen how he will use it. If he has done nothing else he has lifted the dull business of politics out of the rut of the commonplace. And that of itself is no mean achievement.

The third Prime Minister of the Commonwealth was, and still is, the chosen of the organised democrats of the continent. Careful observation of Mr Watson, both in and out of Parliament, impels the writer to the reflection that Nature intended him to be undistinguished. The reasons for coming to this conclusion are not far to seek. To begin with,

Mr Watson has no aggressive, or specially assertive characteristics, whether physical or mental. He has not the gift of dazzling beauty on the one hand, nor the still more useful gift of excessive ugliness on the other. In appearance he is just an ordinary, good-looking, well-set, upright man. In times of crisis there is nothing so calculated to help its possessor as fanaticism; and Mr Watson cannot boast of being a fanatic. Fortune was never kind enough to him to treat him very unkindly. He was never assisted in his campaign on behalf of Labour by any act of injustice or sense of gross personal wrong at the hands of privileged persons. No friendly capitalist helped to make him a statesman by turning his wife and family out of doors. He has had a few ups and downs, but they have been of a minor sort. Undoubtedly it was the intention of Nature that he should go through life without attracting too much notice, that he should set up type and cultivate a garden, and assist in his spare moments at those illuminating debates that shake to their foundations the suburbs of Carlton and of Woolloomooloo.

These original designs have been upset.



Certain political currents took possession of Mr Watson, and he could not get away from them. As a matter of fact, he did not wish to get away from them. He was shrewd enough to realise what an important bearing they might have on the future of a continent, and incidently on the future of Chris. Watson. The Federation movement was a timely one, so far as he was concerned. The inauguration of the Commonwealth Parliament brought with it the division of political parties into Free Trade and Protectionist, with neither of the two sides sufficiently strong to crush or always to out-vote the other. It was a great opportunity for a Labour party, which did not care two constitutional straws about either Free Trade or Protection, to hold the balance of power, and practically to usurp the functions of Government. But the Labour party wanted a leader. It wanted a man who would be sufficiently strong for the purpose—and it was a tremendously important purpose—but not one who would err from excess of strength. It did not want a notorious man, or a violent man, or a man whose name would cause any sort of alarm. It did not want a man who had



been too extensively advertised in connection with socialistic movements in the past. It did not want a distinguished anarchist or a social outlaw. It wanted neither a Danton nor a Robespierre. It discovered Mr Watson, and it has made the most of the discovery.

It is not too much to say that this man, who was intended to be nothing, has become the most important political figure in the English-speaking world — or, at least, of the English-speaking world south of the Equator. That is not to assert that he has been the most talked of, or has wielded the most power. But the movement that he leads in Australia is the most momentous political - cum - social movement known to the present age, and in Australia it has gone further than in any other part of the British dominions. It happened three years ago, for the first time on record, that a man who was the avowed leader of a socialistic party — for the Labour party is socialistic in aim and purpose, if not always in detail and in method—was chosen as the political head of four million English-speaking people. That man was Watson. Without much notice and without much warning, he

found himself raised to a giddy height. All eyes were upon him, all responsibility rested with him, all honours that were the gift of the electors were showered on his head. It was a trying situation, and the predictions of immediate and disastrous failure were numerous. However, the expected did not happen, and the deluge, though on general principles due to arrive, held off. Mr Watson as head of the Commonwealth Ministry acted precisely as he had acted when private member, or when leader of the irrepressible Labour party. Probably he knew that a tremendous head of limelight was being turned upon him; but he gave no outward evidence of the knowledge. If he suffered from self-consciousness, he kept the circumstance from the world.

The man's whole career is an object lesson in the importance of keeping cool. Any study of the ex-compositor's character must impress one fact on the mind. It is a terrible thing to suffer from what the French call *tête montée*; it is a magnificent thing to be able to keep cool. Whether Mr Watson's coolness is the result of temperament or of will power, might

be difficult to say. It is more than probable that it is due to the latter. So far as temperament is concerned, the man is impressionable, and many sided. You can tell by glancing at his good-looking, half-oval, half-practical face, that he has sensuous as well as mental perceptions; that he is not naturally a stoic; that the taste of power and pleasure is not wasted on him; that "the laurel, the palms, the pæan" are to him something more than names. If it were merely a question of temperament, he could let himself go with the best or the worst of us. But the man is master of himself. If Nature and preliminary training have not given him all things; if certain magnetic gifts such as oratorical fire and intellectual fervour are not his; if it be that

Knowledge to his eyes her ample page,  
Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er unroll,

it is yet a fact that he has a marvellous faculty for showing the *mens aqua in arduis*, for keeping his head, for being true to himself in every emergency and at any hour. Temperament may have something to do with the faculty; but it seems to be mainly the result of a resolute and altogether admirable will.

People who know Mr Watson best have never been able to detect any difference in his manner as applicant for work in Sydney, as political chief of a sectional party, or as head of the Commonwealth Government. He performed the impossible when, for the better part of a session, he led the House of Representatives in the face of a large and hostile majority. A man who listened to the extremists behind him, a man who could not think and reason with bullets whistling all round him, could not have done this for a week. Mr Watson did it for four months, and he did it very well. It is more than likely he will have the opportunity of doing it again.

The fourth member of this famous quartette is Mr George Houston Reid. It is melancholy to think what vast quantities of bad writing and indifferent caricaturing have been called forth by this Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia. Melancholy, because the subject is such a good one that it should have been reserved for adequate and original treatment. It is only possible now to repeat a few truisms which are known and recognised of all men. One of these truisms is that Mr

Reid represents the *apotheosis* of intelligence, the triumph of mind over matter. He is not beautiful, or graceful, or slim, or heroic-looking. No one ever accused him of being a glass of fashion, or a mould of form. The ingenious Mr Crosland tells us that a man has no business with a figure; that it is his duty to look like a clothes-prop in youth, and like a balloon in middle life. Mr Reid and Mr Crosland are at one in this matter, with the difference that the Premier has put into practice what the mentally and physically smaller person merely suggested. Certain well-meaning but bat-eyed individuals have accused the ex-Prime Minister of being inconsistent; they point out—good, worthy souls!—that he is found talking in favour of a project at one time, and talking against it at another. These people, well meaning as they are, do not understand. Mr Reid, for his part, does understand. We see here the whole secret of his vast popularity, of his wonderful rise to power. He UNDERSTANDS. When one recollects how few people understand, there is little further to be said.

The ex-Prime Minister is a wonderful

talker ; and for want of anything better to talk to, he talks to public audiences. The general impression seems to be that he enjoys himself on these occasions ; that he likes to hear the plaudits that greet his appearance, the laughter that echoes to his jests, even the interjections that he turns to such good account. But the writer's opinion, derived not only from watching Mr Reid on a platform, but from private conversation with him, is that he knows himself to be mentally adapted for other and better things. What, after all, does the crowd know or care about such gifts of speech, such exquisite verbal delicacy and grace as this man possesses ? True, they can appreciate what he gives them, for he is wise enough to give what they require, not what he himself knows to be most select and valuable. Whenever I think of what is rare and beautiful in the mind or heart of woman ; whenever I think of those gracious and grateful beings who flitted across this planet and died in disappointment because they had found no intellectual mate ; I regret that a mysterious Providence did not put me in their path after endowing me with Mr Reid's gift of speech. It



is a pity that such talent should be dissipated among the vulgar; it is a pity that it should be harnessed to any political engine; it is ten times a pity that it should have so often to put up with the wrong audience, the wrong hour, and the wrong place.

Like all great men, Mr Reid has been responsible for some erroneous impressions. One of the most popular and widespread of these is that he is, by instinct and temperament, a humorist. Nothing could be further from the truth. The late head of the Commonwealth Government is undoubtedly the most serious man that the political exigencies of Australia have ever produced. He has too much insight, too much intelligence not to be serious. Every man who possesses the faculty of making other people laugh must do so by presenting an effective contrast to their own habit of thought. In other words, he must be as different as possible from themselves. Mr Reid is entirely different in thought and disposition from ninety-nine out of every hundred of those who listen to him and laugh with him. *They* are volatile, fickle, amusement-loving; *he* is none of these. That is



the reason why, when he throws for their delectation certain verbal pictures on a rhetorical screen, they laugh with such boisterous mirth and such riotous abandon. The reason why Mr Reid came to take up the *rôle* of jester is easy to understand. If he followed out his own inclinations, he would be either a transcendental philosopher, or a poet of the mystic school. He would never speak a word about politics, and he would never make a joke. He is too clever not to recognise the essential meanness of politics; he is too sombre in disposition not to revolt from the tinkling merriment of a crowd. But he has never got quite free from the idea that success is a desirable thing to obtain. It is the one infirmity that sticks to him. He knows that distinction for a man, physically constituted as he is, is not to be won through the channels of transcendentalism, or by the agency of the lofty rhyme. He knows that for a clever man the best and surest way to success is to play the fool. That is why he has talked on such a commonplace subject as politics to tens of thousands of people; that is why he has so successfully, so brilliantly played the fool.

As already stated, Mr Reid is too intelligent to be wedded exclusively to any one faith or shibboleth. But if he has one political leaning over another, it is in favour of Protection. It is true there is a popular idea to the contrary; but then many popular ideas flourish on the most unsubstantial foundations. There is no difficulty whatever in showing that Mr Reid's one marked characteristic as a statesman is his fondness for Protection. The importers of New South Wales chose to make him their idol. It was not for him to object. It was apparent to him as an intelligent man that if the importer was no better, he was no worse than other people. So it came about that Mr Reid and Free Trade went hand in hand for quite a number of years. But to be strictly devoted to one faith, is to argue oneself blind to the merits of other faiths, and therefore mentally defective. To prove his catholicity of taste, Mr Reid put a few doses of Protection into the Free Trade dish which his fellow colonists were asking at his hands. When at a later stage the invitation came to him to drop fiscalism and merge his free trade in the high-tariffism of Mr Deakin, he gladly did so. There is no doubt that he was getting tired

of the old formulas. How could it be otherwise? Mr Reid owes it to himself, and to his reputation as a man of broad views, to give Protection a turn, and in that direction, beyond doubt, his desire lies. There is a foolish idea, fatuously and blatantly insisted upon by newspaper writers, that, because a man has been harnessed to a party at one stage of his career he should remain harnessed to it for ever. The only universal genius is he who has come to recognise the essential quackery and futility of all political faiths now being foisted upon the community. I do not assert that Mr Reid is, or is not, a universal genius. I merely repeat that he is a man who understands. It is possible to look forward to the time when circumstances, and his own desire to be impartial, will bring him out as the champion of Protection in Australia. This is necessary to the complete and artistic balancing of his career. No one knows this better than himself. And whatever we say of G. H. Reid, whatever we think of him, whatever broad or narrow views we take of him, we are bound to admit that he touches nothing, and has touched nothing, he does not adorn.

# XIII

## THE IMPERIALIST

Regions Cæsar never knew  
Thy posterity shall sway.

THE Imperialist plays an important part in the life of Australia. His influence is to be detected everywhere. It is not always proclaimed in words or manifested in deeds; but, like a subtle essence, it runs through every political and social institution of the country. No one can pretend to understand what goes on in this part of the world unless he makes allowance for the curious blending of the Imperialistic with the local point of view. The two currents do not always flow in unison; but if it were a question of opposing forces, the Imperialist would always carry the day. He is predominant both in the political and in the social world. He is much stronger

than his occasional rival, the little "Australian." He colours most of the legislation, and insensibly affects the habit of thought of the people. Take away the Imperialist from Australia, or even reduce him to a minority, and an entirely new set of conditions, a fresh pathway of national development, would come immediately into view.

The man who calls himself by this term, or even the man who, without assertiveness, acknowledges that it applies to him, is apt to believe that all who differ from him are small-souled and narrow-minded persons. He is inclined to be egotistically self-righteous. He talks of Imperialism as though it were not merely a justifiable political creed, but something superior in the realm of philosophy, something splendid in the domain of morals. The word itself is a large and impressive one. It conjures up wide expanses of territory, great vistas of achievement. It affords unrivalled opportunities for mouth-filling rhetoric and for fine-sounding, platform periods. Its every association is calculated to impress the receptive mind. There need be no astonishment, therefore, at the fact

that those who confine themselves to the local point of view, and acknowledge no fondness for world-stretching dominions, are not highly regarded by the majority in Australia.

Yet it is by no means difficult to show that the essential doctrines of Imperialism are incapable of defence either from the rationalist or from the ethical standpoint. They are, in fact, both illogical and immoral. They are illogical, because they are based on the assumption that a wide expanse of territory can be better looked after by a central authority, than can a relatively small district. They ignore the elementary truth that every community is the best judge of its own requirements. The Imperialist is not satisfied to let any one alone. Every race, as far as practicable, must come under the yoke which he himself acknowledges. Every individual must slumber under the form of Government which he himself prescribes. He believes, quite illogically, that his own prestige is in some fashion enhanced whenever his countrymen dethrone another potentate or lay hands on a fresh piece of territory. He is convinced that the welfare of Australia is enhanced by



the circumstance that certain gentlemen, living at a very remote distance, can, if they so choose, veto some of our most important pieces of legislation, and overset some of our most intimate concerns.

If it be admitted, as it must be, that the underlying principle of Imperialism is illogical, it will also be admitted that the same principle is decidedly immoral. Every empire is more or less built up by the sword. Every empire is more or less maintained in the same fashion. And it is an elementary truth that the sword and morality have nothing to do with each other. We can judge these things better from a distance. We can see plainly enough that it was wrong and immoral of Xerxes to wish to add to his territories by annexing Greece; that it was grasping of Julius Cæsar to reach out after Gaul and Britain; that it was wicked of Napoleon to covet Egypt; and that it was sinful of Russia to lay hands on Poland and Manchuria. But we are not prepared to speak thus definitely of the moral significance of another nation's attitude towards Cape Colony and Egypt and India. What we do say in that connection, is that the white



man has a burden to shoulder and a duty to accomplish. We are inclined to get angry, and to call the strict moralist—whenever he attempts to dictate the policy of nations—a narrow-minded, insufferable prig. And so, as a matter of fact, he may be. But no harm would be done by admitting, in a general way, that the doctrines of Imperialism and of morality are not precisely identical.

But neither cold reason nor hard rules of conduct can build up and vitalise a nation. There is such a quality as *sentiment*; and it is just this quality that gives the Imperialist his pre-eminent place. For sentiment always has been, and always will be, the most useful and valuable, just as it is the most illogical, faculty that an individual or a nation can possess. When we recollect what it has given us in the domain of poetry, of imaginative prose, of art, of music, of sculpture, we recognise that logic does not deserve to be mentioned with it in the same breath. Sentiment is even greater than morality, because it creates its own morality—a morality very much finer and very much truer than that of any conventional school. The

Imperialist, therefore, in spite of his unreason, contains within him a spark of that which illumines and creates. The sentiment of race, the sentiment of religion, the sentiment of patriotism, the sentiment of devotion to an ideal, to a memory, to a national past, to a series of great names, to a battlefield, to a grave—all this is, from the logical point of view, incapable of a moment's defence. It is fantastic, illusory, absurd. But when one comes to think how unspeakably unlovely would be any existence that was mapped out by reason, and supported by dogma, and guided from infantile beginnings to senile decay, by a cold and brutal calculation of the practical advantages likely to follow on certain acts, one can only feel grateful that the sentimentalist, and not the economist or the calculator, has still the dominating voice in the life of the time.

The Imperialist, therefore, in the sense now being made use of, is a person to be lightly regarded by disciples of Bentham and Bain, and to be warmly admired and applauded by all other sections of the community. This is he who, though he has never been within ten

thousand miles of Great Britain, speaks of it as "home," and incidentally refers to the place of his birth as a land of exile. This is he who, a few years ago, talked often of the necessity of wiping out the memory of Majuba, and who even now does not like to be reminded of Nicholson's Nek and Magersfontein and the Tugela River. As a member of the human race he might be proud to think that at these places some farmers, his fellow-beings, performed praiseworthy feats in the face of tremendous odds. But the Imperialist assumes that the feats were performed by the wrong people, and is not proud of them. This is he who, by virtue of some curious and unintelligible process, manages to feel himself a larger and more sublime personality because of the fact that, long before he was born, men wearing red uniforms and living at the opposite end of the world purchased with their lives the barren glory of Badajoz, and stood unshaken through the fiery ordeal of Waterloo. And this is he who refers to such and such an action as conceived in the interests of that large and vague thing known as the Empire; who is fond of talking about what "we" ought

to do in Afghanistan, and what should be "our" policy in Cochin China; who sublimely ignores the fact that neither he himself, nor the community in which he lives, has any more to do with Afghanistan and Cochin China than it has with the North Pole or the mountains of the Moon.

"Even a Cecil," observed an Irish member in the House of Commons recently, "will not die for the Meridian of Greenwich." The remark illustrated a great truth. A man will only die for something that has a history, for something that calls forth an emotion, for something that appeals to his individual or his national pride. He will not die for the Meridian of Greenwich, any more than he will die for the peak of Kosciusko, or for the Sydney Town Hall, or for the Melbourne Parliamentary buildings, or for the Federal tariff. Of what avail is it for a poet to write about the star of Australia? It is likely enough that the star will arise some day, and it is perfectly certain that the event, when it does take place, will be heralded by clouds of war. Every national constellation must rise, if it rises at all, from such a cradle.

But in the meantime there is nothing in the history of Australia to awake sentiment of any sort—unless it be a sentiment of disgust at the manner in which the aborigines were treated, and of shame for the early records of Botany Bay. A nation must have some ties of remembrance and of vanity to hold it together. Australia is still mainly Imperialistic—because of the force of heredity, because of the triumph of unreason, and because of the part that sentiment plays in the life of the people.

Apart from the genuine Imperialist into whose faith the calculation of material advantages does not consciously enter, there is the professing Imperialist of the political type. This individual is to be met with in Parliament, at public meetings, and in the newspapers. Often his opinions are elaborately thought out, and now and again they are adequately expressed. Imagination may have a part, but not the leading part, in his composition. Neither is he a product of any one emotion, or set of emotions. He has usually a large measure of prudence, and always a certain capacity for looking ahead. He talks a great

deal about the balance of power in Europe, and the possible shifting of that balance owing to Japanese successes in the Far East. He advocates a larger Australian contribution to the British Navy, and remarks with solemn emphasis that the only guarantee of safety held by this Southern continent—the continent which he inhabits—is afforded by the existence of English ships of war. This political and professing Imperialist will declaim from any number of platforms on the necessity of keeping intact all the existing bonds of Empire, and of manufacturing as many new ones as possible. He foresees a yellow peril, a Russian peril, a German peril, an American peril—in fact any number of perils. He is strenuously alive to the possibility, in fact the imminent probability, of some nation, whether it be white, brown, black, or yellow, casting acquisitive eyes on the new and tempting and half unpeopled continent. Though not imaginative, he can picture the probable result of a conflict between Togo's vessels and the auxiliary Australian squadron. And he is sincerely desirous that nothing should occur, for the present, to mar existing relations with Great Britain, or to cause the



habit of reliance upon the most powerful navy in the world to cease.

The objection to this variety of Imperialist is that he cannot be relied upon. For the motive that animates him is self-interest. And national self-interest is not a whit more dependable, while it is even less admirable, than the self-interest of individuals. It may be that a certain line of conduct appears, for the time being, advantageous. Then the balance of power is shifted, and a diametrically opposite course becomes advisable. The unit may be forgiven for seeking the unit's good. It is a way that units have. But from the nation, or from the collective spirit of the nation, something more lofty and inspiring might be expected. The political Imperialist reduces everything to a formula. He may deal in high-sounding phrases, but he does not mean them. He may not tell his audience, but he tells himself that a certain course of action pays best. He has no illusions. He is not an idealist. He does not pretend to be heroic. His eye is ever upon the main chance. So far from being a buttress of Imperialism he is in reality its chief danger



—the chief danger, that is to say, to its existence as a permanent factor in the life of the world. For undervaluing sentiment as he does, dealing with supposed advantages and disadvantages as he does, he is morally certain to adjust his views to successive changes on the international horizon. The moment Australia becomes, in his opinion, strong enough to protect herself; the moment she can afford to be independent of Downing Street; the moment she is powerful enough to resent interference; that moment becomes, in the view of the political Imperialist, the moment to cast adrift. Manifestly the bonds must be different from those of temporary self-interest if they are to have any holding power.

There remains the important problem of improving the position—assuming that it can be improved—from the Imperialist point of view. We want, first of all, to know where we are. Our relations to Great Britain are of two kinds, the one definite and precise, the other indefinite and somewhat vague. The political relationship is the definite one, the one that exists on paper, the one that is subject at any moment to constitutional

readjustment. It implies a certain amount of formalism, a certain hint of subserviency, even a certain suggestion of force. It means that we cannot legislate on all subjects exactly as we like. It means, also, the payment of a certain sum of money in the upkeep of Vice-regal establishments, and in the contributions to the British Navy. As a set off to this political dependence, and to this necessity for paying away occasional sums of money, there are a number of material gains. There is the commercial gain represented by the protection of the British flag. This is a consideration that runs throughout the whole domain of trade and industry, and gives to every transaction a security and confidence that would otherwise be absent. Then there is the financial saving on the defence vote. Instead of spending less than £900,000 a year on defence we should have to spend several millions if there were no reliance on the Imperial forces. Further, there is the social advantage—a great advantage in the eyes of some people, a negative advantage in the eyes of others—implied in the presence of a number of titled personages who represent the Crown

in Australia, and add greatly to the importance of a number of socially ambitious individuals. Looking at the constitutional problem as a whole, and weighing material gains against certain definite losses, it may fairly be agreed that the former much preponderate.

Yet the political tie as such is never binding. "A fig for these paper agreements!" exclaimed Mr C. C. Kingston in the Federal House of Representatives a year or two ago. The accompanying snap of the fingers meant a great deal. The first Australian Minister for Customs was, and at the time of writing is, a democrat of the democrats. No one knows better than he that it is not only useless, but criminally foolish to attempt to hold together peoples living on opposite sides of the globe, if their hearts are not in the bond. Australia is mainly Imperialist to-day, because of certain considerations that lie outside the track of any huxtering politician, or of any self-important statesman residing either north or south of the Equator. It is Imperialist because it is susceptible to the breath of impulse, and of memory, and of something finer and more intangible still. It is loyal not so much to a dynasty, or to an individual, or to a parchment

bond, as to the tie of race, the idea of kinship, the value of tradition, the glamour of history, the pride that springs from the knowledge of certain achievements—achievements that have helped to make the country and its people what they are.

This Imperialism, which is the result of sentiment, and not of any political arrangement, is to be met with in the street, in the train, in the tram-car, in the hotel, in the private house, in the social circle. The writer was in King Street, Sydney, when the news of the surrender of Cronje was posted outside a newspaper office. And he was in Collins Street, Melbourne, when the announcement of the relief of Mafeking came to hand. The demonstration that took place in either city was instructive from any point of view. When a crowd, and more especially an Anglo-Saxon crowd, becomes fervid with excitement and metaphorically stands on its head, and turns itself into one vast menagerie, it is safe to assume that the motive power is a fairly strong one. It is no explanation to say that the people were merely anxious to create a disturbance—that they were devoid of political convictions and had no definite idea on the subject of international or

pan-Britannic relations. The splendid foolishness that everywhere manifested itself on account of the improved fortunes of the defenders of Mafeking—on account, if you will, of the avoidance of whatever national dishonour would have been caused by the fall of the place—was, and is, the most eloquent testimony to the existence of Imperialism as a vital force in Australia. What did it matter to the people in the streets? What was Mafeking to them, or what were they to Mafeking? And yet they mafficked—and in the folly of the moment demonstrated more than a whole tribe of philosophers could disprove in a life-time.

But there are people—anxious, untiring, well-meaning people—who are not satisfied. It is not enough that Australia should have shewn its feelings in the only way in which they can be shewn. It is not enough that the country should have sent soldiers to the war, should have yelled itself hoarse for the cause in which they went, and should have rioted with frantic enthusiasm when they came back. It is not enough that the streets of Melbourne and Sydney should have been converted into Pandemonium. The statement

is being made that the bonds of union must be drawn tighter. The necessity is being urged for the taking of steps to prevent any drifting apart. Somebody imagines that constitutional relationships can be improved. The political wheel is asked to be set in motion. There is declared to be danger to the Empire because of possible commercial friction. One Parliament sits at Westminster, and on its own responsibility takes steps that may not only imperil the trade and commercial interests, but place at stake the national honour, and the life of men residing at Brisbane and Ballarat. The political Imperialists say the position is alarming. They are certain that something ought to be done. But what is it to be?

It has been contended by very respectable authorities that there should be representation of Australia at Westminster. And it has been contended, just as ably, that there should be preferential trade. Both contentions can be strongly supported on a logical basis. It is unreasonable to expect educated and civilised people to submit to interference from bodies whom they have no share in calling into existence. It is unreasonable—and yet the



submission takes place. No doubt there are advantages by way of compensation. But the broad, and self-evident, and theoretically objectionable circumstance is that the people who have left England to build up Greater Britain agree to be governed without representation on their part by the people who have stayed at home. Then, again, the fact has been rediscovered that competing tariffs make the commercial relationships of the United Kingdom and Australia increasingly difficult, and tend to drive the two countries further apart. The brilliant idea has occurred to one statesman that it is possible to unite Britain and Greater Britain more closely together, and to keep the foreign gentleman at a more respectful distance, by the simple process of manipulating the customs duties. From one point of view—in fact, from many points of view—he is quite correct. Preferential trade implies a bond of mutual self-interest. And there is no reasoner in the world who would not say unhesitatingly that nations and individuals are more likely to hang together when there exists a tie of self-interest between them.

Every man or woman possessed of rudimentary intelligence would say this. But he or she would almost certainly be in error in applying the abstract principle to the union between England and Australia. Let it be said again that the bond is not one that has grown strong by reason of political adjustments, or of commercial necessities. Its virtue consists in the fact that it has not been manufactured in the mills of diplomacy. The more it is tampered with, the weaker it becomes. It is made of impalpable materials—of such materials as memory, sentiment, self-abnegation, heredity, pride. To attempt to trim it in one place or to buttress it in another is to attempt to alter its character, and thus bring about its decay. The Imperialist, if he is a genuine Imperialist, requires only to be let alone. He should not be irritated and thwarted, but he does not need to be artificially fed and pampered. Whether he will last for many more generations is an open question. But for the present he must be considered as a survival of a splendid age—the age of unreason and of chivalry and of people wisely unwise.

## XIV

### THE LITTLE AUSTRALIAN

Masters of the Seven Seas,  
Oh, love and understand !

THE little Australian, despite his name, is not a product of the soil. He is manufactured abroad. In the main, he is the outcome of English criticism and of English public opinion. He is the result of influences at work outside Australia. Very often he is born with an Imperialistic, or it may be a jingoistic, temperament. But circumstances tend to drive him in upon himself; to dwarf his incipient ideas of Imperial greatness and of pan-Britannic confederation; to limit his vision and his sympathies to the country in which he lives; to substitute for his racial affinities a narrower feeling of kinship and a more local point of view.

“Forgive them,” exclaimed the first Christian

martyr, "lay not this sin to their charge." The tragedy of Stephen, though terrible and heart-breaking, was yet a tragedy in purple. The victim was, and is, a sublime figure. It is comparatively easy to ask forgiveness for those who, in putting a period to your material existence, lift you at once to a pinnacle of undying fame. But it is not easy to forgive a series of acts, or even an attitude of mind, that is a continual source of belittlement, annoyance, and exasperation. This task is difficult, whether for the nation or for the individual. It may be unwillingly undertaken for a while, but in the long run it is usually abandoned.

There is much in England's attitude to Australia that is calculated either to put a strain on sympathy, or to sow the seeds of active discontent. This attitude cannot be brought within the four corners of one generalisation. And anything said about it in a comprehensive way must be subject to numerous exceptions. It is necessary to be fair to the people in England who know Australia personally; to those who, without knowing it personally, have taken the trouble

to learn about it ; and to those rare souls who appear to have an instinctive, undefinable sympathy with all efforts and achievements of their countrymen either at home or beyond the seas. Yet the fact remains, after all the circumstances have been considered, and after the last exception has been allowed for, that the Englishman's conscious or unconscious bearing towards the man who lives outside of England is the best reason and excuse for the growth of the product that has come to be dubbed "little Australian."

In the political relationships of the two countries a certain amount of aloofness, a certain spirit of alienation, has always been noticeable. It is about half a century, or more, since a British Prime Minister was in the habit of making allusions to "these wretched Colonies." This member of the privileged classes was candid enough to think aloud. Other statesmen have thought as much, but have said less. The House of Commons represents Great Britain and misrepresents Ireland. It has no wish to add to its aims of representation and misrepresentation the maladministration of the affairs of

Australia. It does not desire closer union with that country. Colonial politicians are not wanted at Westminster. Downing Street does not love them, although it tolerates them, and on great occasions invites them to call. It sends them an occasional Governor-General, and a more frequent State Governor. It sometimes leaves the impression that the choice has been hastily made, and that the people responsible regarded the matter as of no great importance. Such an opinion, it may be said in passing, is the greatest mistake possible. An era of *perfect* Vice-regal representatives might mean an era of universal Imperialism. Owing to the large amount of *indifference* that prevails in British political circles, it has come about that a feeling of strangeness has been accentuated. Even the fervid Imperialism of a Chamberlain, if it abide alone, will not alter the trend of events.

But the views, or lack of views, of English statesmen towards Australia are far from being the chief cause of complaint in the younger country. Neither are they the source from which the little Australian most naturally springs. The stolid, unyielding, invincible



prejudices of the English middle classes are a more important factor in the case. What does the man who has lived his life in the Midland Counties, or in Yorkshire, or in London, know about the Antipodes? What does he care to know? What is the use of telling him that at the Antipodes life may be as artistic, wit as polished, society as versatile, conventional codes as precise, manners as decorous, wealth as prodigal, intellect as keen, and the indefinable something known as *savoir faire* as pronounced as in England? The Midlander would not believe it. And his wife would believe it still less. The Englishman should make it his business to learn something of the land that his countrymen have peopled. His geographical ignorance should be less complete, less appalling. One obstacle to lasting cohesion will be removed when the man who picks up his paper in Yorkshire or Warwickshire is aware that Victoria is not the Capital of New South Wales, and that people in Brisbane are debarred by distance from paying afternoon calls upon people in Geelong.

Another of the centrifugal forces at work is

the attitude of the older nation towards the incipient art and literature of the new one. It is always a mistake to despise the day of small things. The error is one that is being constantly made by the English critic, the English reviewer, the English publisher, the English artist, and—to some extent—by the English reader. You will hear it said in London that the Colonies have been “overdone.” You need not believe it. They have never been anything but *underdone*. They have always been fighting for recognition and very imperfectly obtaining it. The young men from Oxford and Cambridge have come to regard Fleet Street as their special domain. They have never been anxious to greet the outsider. They do not actually forbid intrusion, but they do not welcome it, and they do not wish it. The newspaper proprietors and editors are of the same way of thinking. A Colonial reputation to them means nothing, or less than nothing. The very fact that it is Colonial is enough to damn it. The word “Colonial” is unfortunate. Such a term, with such associations, might damn anything. Its use in this way is an injustice to the people to

whom it is applied, a reflection on the manner of thinking of the people who apply it. It is a significant fact that the man who has done brilliantly in Melbourne or Sydney finds it harder to make a commencement in the metropolis *of his own race* than does the man who has achieved nothing better than failure in Birmingham or York. English experience, good, bad, or indifferent, is understood to be better than Colonial success.

Still another factor calling for consideration is the tone of English society. In some respects this is the most important of all. Were it not for this, much could be forgiven. The Australian could overlook the majestic indifference of the Assembly that sits at Westminster; he could smile at the profound lack of topographical information possessed by the middle-class Briton in reference to Australia; and he could put up with the hard suspicion that greets his claims to a place in the literary or the artistic world. He could put up with these, and endeavour to overcome them. But he finds exasperating and well-nigh unendurable the slight movement of the shoulders, and the imperceptible

lifting of the eyebrows, that, in certain exclusive circles, greet the mention of the word Australian. These indications of opinion are trifles. Society itself is the most futile and absurd of trifles. But the ridiculous prejudices of the most trifling individuals may have more influence upon international relationships than years of actual misgovernment or oceans of wordy vituperation. The Australian is aware of one or two things. He knows that although his erudition may be sound, his clothes faultless, and his hands as clean as his linen—though he may have much knowledge, much tact, much eloquence, much refinement—his acceptance among the people who can trace their descent for a couple of centuries will be achieved in spite of, and in no way because of, the land of his birth. He knows that in a particular circle, a circle that is largely the preserve of soulless aristocrats and commonplace millionaires and pushful Americans, there can be heard every now and then the exclamation, “Oh, Australians!” The delicate, almost imperceptible, irony of the tone in which these words are uttered may yet bring about the dismemberment of the Empire. No

man cares to be thought ridiculous. No man relishes the suggestion—even the most faintly implied, ostensibly denied suggestion—that in the social sense he does not know how to live.

Mainly as the result of what is going on in England, partly because of other reasons, there is growing up in Australia a feeling of antagonism to constitutional ties as they now exist. I say “growing up,” although the shoots are at present hardly noticeable, and the vitality is taken from them by the vigour of other trees. But no one can afford to be blind to the signs of the times. In the Southern continent there is a strong and developing Labour party. Politically it is of the utmost importance. Where it does not actually choose Ministries and pass legislation it is the controlling or balancing force without which the Government in office could not carry on. This political Labour party is leavened with Republicanism. More than that, it is in spirit and essence Republican ; that is to say, anti-Monarchical, and in a measure Separationist. So far, it is not actively disloyal. It has by no means shaken off old associations. The influences of race and of heredity

are with it yet. The name and fame of England are more to it than the name and fame of France or Germany, or America, or Japan. Many of its members took part in the honourable folly of the Mafeking celebrations. But old associations become older each year; and even heredity is not in the long run proof against environment. A party that has to fight for its existence in Parliament, and to earn its own living outside of it, has not much time for sentiment. It comes down to bed-rock sooner than do other parties. All the patriotic ideals, all the associations of remoter kinship, all the far-off memories of battle fields, all the impalpable nothings that help to bind an Empire together, are not proof in the long run against the practical tendencies of the man who knows only his own surroundings—who is chiefly occupied in supplying material wants, and who wishes to be let alone.

Outside of political circles, and outside of the Labour party, there is a certain body of opinion that sees, or professes to see, indications of coming change. Causes of irritation are always arising. English newspaper criticism of



Australia is one fruitful source of complaint. The returned Australian—the man who has battled hard for a living in London and has more or less failed — comes back with the conviction that racial sentiment is a vain and foolish thing. For him it is dead ; its embers lie strewn about the pavement that runs past London newspaper offices, and are trampled under foot by the indifferent millions on their passage to and fro. The thoughtful and clever Australian, looking to the prevailing signs of the times, looking to the attitude of Downing Street, of Fleet Street, and of Belgravia, begins to pin his faith to a future that is not the future of the old world, but of the new.

For the present, old ties, old institutions, old associations are in the ascendant. The continent is owned, and to some extent governed, by men of peregrinating habits ; by men to whom the Red Sea is as familiar as Collins Street ; by men to whom the journey from Tilbury to Adelaide is no more formidable, and not much more unusual, than a cab-drive from the Marble Arch to London Bridge. These people, though they live in the Southern Hemisphere, have most of their

financial, commercial, and social interests in the world's metropolis. These people own most of the property and possess a preponderating, though a diminishing, share in the Government of the new country. Assisting them, and co-operating with them, is the racial and Imperialistic sentiment of the Australian middle classes. But the other type of individual — the man who believes that formulas have no hold over him, and who declares that he "may not call a throned puppet Lord"—is making himself felt more as a silent than as an eloquent factor in the life of the people. This is the type that is known as "little Australian." On A.N.A. platforms, in suburban debating societies, at Trades' Hall councils, and at Yarra Bank gatherings, it succeeds in making its aspirations heard. In social circles, in the region of practical politics, it is dumb and futile. But it is ambitious, and expects to grow.

For many reasons one might sympathise with the little Australian, and even feel some sorrow for him. He has so few materials with which to build. He has no national flag, no history, no bead-roll of fame, no justifica-

tion for enthusiasm of any kind. He wishes to feel, and to spread around him, an atmosphere of enthusiasm for the land in which he was born. He wishes to see the embers removed from England, and relighted in Australia. But how is the thing to be done? National sentiment is largely the product of memories. And the Australian, as an Australian, has no memories worthy of the name. If he looks back a century—and he can look back no further—he finds merely the trail of the unattractive aboriginal, of the nomadic gold digger, and of that other man who, like Barrington, left his country for his country's good. Hamlet declares that you cannot feed capons, that is to say, young cocks, on air; and you can hardly nourish the flame of patriotic sentiment on recollections such as these. So it is that in Australia the shrine of the local patriot is difficult to tend. The altar has not been stained with crimson as every rallying centre of a nation should be. A large expanse of territory, some trees, a whitey-grey or dull green landscape, a number of new buildings, a hard blue sky, a succession of fine days, and alternating

periods of drought—these must be the outward and visible symbols, in default of others more histrionic and less tangible, on which the sentiment of the nation has to feed. It is no wonder that the result is a slow and fluctuating and uncertain growth.

But the little Australian lives on, and believes that time will have its revenges. He believes that each year as it passes is fighting for him. He knows that he is not strong enough to found a party that will carry any weight in the Government of the country. He is aware, also, that he can get no audience to listen to the gospel that is dearest to him, elsewhere than by the banks of rivers, at the less reputable street corners, or in the open spaces of a city domain. He recognises that the earth belongs to those who think very differently from himself. He has no hope of achieving a *tour de force*. But he is by no means idle. He does what he can. His voice is raised against all proposals that seem to have an old-world origin, or to be actuated by sympathy with old-world forms of Government. Thus he is an active opponent of the agreement under which Australia pays a naval

subsidy of £200,000 to Great Britain. He is not candid enough to say what he really thinks—that he desires his country to be quite independent of the parent nation. But he talks, with an amusing sophistry that deceives no one, of the advantages that would accrue to the people of England if Australia possessed a navy of her own. Besides objecting to the naval subsidy he objects to State Governors, to all appeals from his part of the world to the Privy Council, to contingents such as those that went to South Africa, to the right of veto upon colonial legislation. All these are principles or practices that can be protested against without openly enlisting under the Separationist flag. The little Australian is not sure that the time is ripe for objecting to an English Governor-General, or to the appearance of the head of the Sovereign on the coins of the realm. But where there is a chance of doing something, he does it; where there is a head unprotected, he hits it as hard as he can.

What is the future to be? No one knows, least of all the little Australian. Sometimes he sees visions, sometimes he dreams dreams. But he lacks constructive ability, and he is

wanting in definite aim. His antecedents are of a heterogeneous character. It may be that he is of Irish descent, and that memories of Drogheda and Vinegar Hill are running in his blood. Perhaps he has a Gaelic strain and refuses, as some Scotchmen still refuse, to forego the hereditary instinct which meant war to the knife against the race across the Border. Or possibly he is a German for whom loyalty to Great Britain has no meaning; or possibly an Italian, the child of a country that is always talking about liberty, but has forgotten how to use it. Perhaps he is an Englishman who for adequate personal reasons has a vendetta against his fathers' country, and everything connected with it. There are a number of local causes, a number of nationalities, a number of racial prejudices helping to build up the little Australian. But for the present the Imperialists of the continent can afford to smile at him. They know that his day is not yet.





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